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AUTHOR Godbey, Cynthia; Ronde, Joyce Te; Throckmorton, Paula

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ABSTRACT

This study describes a program for improving the feedback of student achievement to parents, teachers, and administrators through the use of alternative forms of assessment. The targeted population consisted of students in three Midwestern unit school districts: two kindergarten classes and fifth and sixth graders in a combined class. Data from these schools had suggested that traditional assessments did not provide sufficient feedback. A review of the solution strategies suggested by education professionals indicated that alternative forms of assessment provided parents with information needed to gain clear understanding of students' progress. Various alternative assessments were introduced in the study classrooms. Post intervention data indicate that alternative assessments enabled parents to assist students in developing academic skills when criteria and expectations were identified. The use of the alternative assessments also improved student performance. Thirteen appendixes contain interview and survey documents from the study. (Contains 11 tables, 6 figures, and 40 references.) (Author/SLD)

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INTERPRETING STUDENT PERFORMANCE THROUGH THE USE OF ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF ASSESSMENT

Cynthia Godbey
Joyce Te Ronde
Paula Throckmorton

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University And IRI/SkyLight

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Abstract

This study describes a program for improving the feedback of student achievement to parents, teachers, and administrators through the use of alternative forms of assessment. The targeted population consisted of kindergarten, fifth, and sixth graders in three Midwestern unit school districts.

Analysis of probable cause data suggested traditional assessments did not provide sufficient feedback.

A review of solution strategies suggested by published educational professionals indicated alternative forms of assessment provided parents with information needed to gain clear understanding of students' progress.

Post intervention data indicated alternative assessment enabled parents to better assist students' academic skills when criteria and expectations were identified. The use of alternative assessments such as rubrics, checklists, portfolios, learning logs, and journals also improved student performance.

SIGNATURE PAGE

This project was approved by

Jan W. Kline
Advisor

Dr. June Tupper
Advisor

Beverly Gulley
Dean, School of Education

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT

CHAPTER 1—PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTENT 1

General Statement of the Problem 1

Immediate Problem Context 2

Site A 2

Site B 10

Site C 20

National Context of the Problem 26

CHAPTER 2—PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION 30

Problem Evidence and Causes 30

Literature Review 39

CHAPTER 4—ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF ASSESSMENT 43

Literature Review 43

Project Objectives and Processes 52

Project Action Plan 53

Methods of Assessment 57

CHAPTER 4—PROJECT RESULTS 59

Historical Description of the Intervention 59

Presentation and Analysis of Results 61

Conclusions and Recommendations 72

REFERENCES CITED 79

APPENDICES

Appendix A Student Report Card Survey....82

Appendix B Kindergarten Student Interview....83

Appendix C. Parent Report Card Survey....84

Appendix D Teacher Report Card Survey....86

Appendix E Administrator Report Card Survey....88

Appendix F Kindergarten Math Inventory....90

Appendix G Kindergarten Language Arts Inventory....92

Appendix H Portfolio Assessment Survey....94

Appendix I Checklist Assessment Survey....95

Appendix J Rubric Assessment Survey....96

Appendix K Learning Logs and Journals Assessment Survey....97

Appendix L Parent Postmeasure Survey....98

Appendix M Student Postmeasure Survey....99

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Traditional report cards do not provide enough specific information to help parents interpret the level of their child's performance. Students and parents of the targeted elementary classrooms had historically been exposed to the limitations of conventional paper and pencil assessments and the resulting letter and percentage grades. These grades were often imprecise representations of a student's range of progress. Parents routinely questioned educators about grading practices. Teachers and administrators stated that report cards did not show continuous progress between grading periods. These reports did not provide the tool for teachers to summarize positive student achievement. Furthermore, parents were unable to assist their children in improving academic skills due to a lack of specific feedback. In addition, traditional assessments and report cards did not involve students' active participation. These issues caused the teachers who conducted this research to develop and incorporate the use of alternative forms of assessment into their classrooms and to evaluate the effect that this intervention had on student performance and parent communication.

Immediate Problem Context

Teachers in three different school districts conducted the research. Students in two kindergarten classrooms and one fifth and sixth grade team classroom participated in the study.

Site A Building Description

Targeted Site A was part of an educational complex nestled in a small town, residential area. The site was bordered on the north by a busy two-lane state highway, on the east by a pasture, and on the west by a farm field. Students in this research study attended class in a brown, wooden shingled, portable building located at the back of a gravel parking lot. The district added this building to the educational complex in August 1996 in response to a need for additional classroom space. Students in grades 1 through 12 attended classes in the east wing of the nearby circa 1920 and 1958 red brick building. A sidewalk connected Site A to the main building. Extending from this pathway was a wooden ramp leading to a deck that framed the entryway of each classroom. Located to the east of, and slightly behind Site A, was a wood-chip covered playground containing swings, a moonwalk, a yellow slide, and a brightly colored play center.

Two kindergarten classrooms, divided by a hallway, were housed in the portable building. Two handicapped accessible rest rooms, designed for use by one student at a time, were located on one side of the hallway. The rest rooms were divided by a drinking fountain and a paper towel dispenser. On the opposite side of the hallway, two large closets with built-in shelves provided storage space for the colorful paper, paint, and wide array of manipulatives used daily in a kindergarten program. A telephone on

the wall between the two storage closets provided communication with the main building.

Site A Classroom Description

Students entered a larger than usual, carpeted classroom with oversized, inflatable crayons hanging from the ceiling. A front door, a door to the hallway, and a back door opening onto a wooden deck provided exits from the classroom. Four windows on the south provided natural light for the learning environment. Students in this targeted kindergarten classroom enjoyed one of only two air-conditioned classrooms in the elementary school.

A horseshoe-shaped arrangement of tables provided seating for the students. The open carpeted area in front of the bulletin board, on which calendar activities were displayed, provided an area for children to sit during group activities. Students moved to different locations at the tables for small group and cooperative learning projects. One computer with a printer, used by both students and the teacher, was located at the back, left corner of the classroom. The monitor, connected to a large television screen, enabled the teacher to share computer activities with the entire class.

Students proudly displayed their seasonal projects on two bulletin boards, located to the left of the front door. The alphabet, numbers, nursery rhymes, and other visual aids relating to the kindergarten curriculum were displayed on the classroom walls. Students had access to brightly colored pattern blocks, vivid unifix cubes, puzzles, beads, and books located throughout the room. Colorful, inflatable characters, used to teach students letters and sounds, sat atop the shelving above the coat hooks and school box storage area.

Site A Student Demographics

The elementary school, of which Site A was a part, had a total enrollment of 236 students coming from two different communities. Of these 236 students, 98.7% were White, 0.8% were Black, and 0.4% were Hispanic. Low-income students accounted for 13.6% of the total elementary school population. The 95.6% attendance rate for the school was slightly higher than the state's 93.9%. A mobility rate of 14.6% indicated a somewhat more stable population than the state average of 17.5% (Illinois School Report Card, 2000).

Average class size for kindergarten and third grade was 21, and the average class size for first grade was 15. The average elementary pupil to teacher ratio was 14.7 to 1. One hundred percent of elementary students' parents or guardians had personal contact with the staff during the school year in the form of conferences, parental visits to school, telephone conversations, and written correspondence (Illinois School Report Card, 2000).

As illustrated in Table 1, over 50% of students in the elementary school met state standards in the subjects of reading and math but fell below state standards in the subject of writing at the third grade level. The staff met regularly to address these concerns.

Table 1

State Achievement Test Results for Third Grade

Test Type	Academic Warning	Below Standards	Meets Standards	Exceeds Standards	% Tested
Reading	5%	33%	52%	10%	93%
Mathematics	7%	24%	57%	12%	93%
Writing	16%	60%	24%	0%	100%

Note. From Illinois School Report Card, 2000.

Site A Faculty and Staff Demographics

Staff at the elementary school was comprised of one elementary principal, two Title I teachers, one full-time and one part-time special education teacher, one part-time speech and language teacher, two teachers at each of the kindergarten through fifth grade levels, as well as special education, classroom, library, computer and cafeteria aides. High school and junior high school students in the district shared the part-time nurse, librarian, music teacher, and four physical education teachers. With the exception of the physical education teachers, all elementary teachers were female. Additional support staff included one elementary secretary, one cook with kitchen duties only, three part-time cooks who also provided janitorial services, and one maintenance worker.

Site A Programs Offered

The Site A kindergarten classroom curriculum was comprised of a reading readiness program, math, handwriting, science, social studies, and a computer-based reading and writing program. Students visited the elementary computer lab in the main building for one hour daily during the second semester to utilize the program's materials. Students also walked to the main building to receive general music instruction and to

use the library services on a rotating basis for 20 minutes per session. Kindergartners participated in physical education activities for 40 minutes each day.

Children needing additional academic assistance received help from the Title I staff or the special education staff. A part-time speech and language teacher served students with speech and language deficiencies. Students who had problems that needed to be addressed in order for them to succeed in school benefited from the student assistance program.

For one month each year, elementary students worked with a different artist from the state's Artist-In-Residence program. The fourth grade was the designated core group and had the opportunity to work with the artist each day. Other grade levels met with the artist a minimum of three times during the course of the residency and attended the opening and closing assemblies presented by the artist.

Pizza Hut annually sponsored a reading incentive program for all of the students in the elementary school. Students participating in this popular activity earned coupons for free pizza upon completion of the reading goal set by the teacher.

Community volunteers worked with the students in Site A on a daily basis. Students enjoyed receiving individual attention from these senior citizens.

Parents of students in the Site A classroom received a weekly newsletter containing information about the curriculum and school events. The teacher included specific suggestions to assist the students with the skills they were learning. The weekly homework, attached to the newsletter, was used as a tool to provide feedback on the progress their child was making.

Site A District Demographics

Site A was part of a rural community unit school district formed in 1989 when 2 Midwestern school districts 20 miles apart consolidated. The superintendent's office, elementary school, and high school were located in Village 1. The junior high was located in Village 2. One superintendent and 3 principals led the three schools within the district serving a total enrollment of 532 students. Of these students, 99.4% were White, 0.4% were Black, and 0.2% were Hispanic. One chronically truant student gave the district a 0.2% truancy rate. Students in the district had a 95.1% attendance rate and a 0.0% dropout rate. An 85.0% graduation rate was slightly higher than the 82.6 % state graduation rate. A 15.5% mobility rate was somewhat less than the 17.5% mobility rate for the state. Low-income students accounted for 15% of the student population (Illinois School Report Card, 2000).

The district employed 40 teachers: 100% of them were White. Males accounted for 22.2 % of the teaching staff, which was 2.2% less than the state average. Females made up the remaining 77.8%. Teachers in the district had an average 15.4 years of teaching experience. Seventy-nine percent of the teachers had a bachelor's degree, while 21% had a master's degree or a master's degree plus additional education. The pupil to administrator ratio was 152.0 to 1 while the pupil to certified staff ratio was 11.7 to 1. Music, physical education, and technology teachers divided their time between the three schools in the district (Illinois School Report Card, 2000).

Teachers in the district earned an average salary of $33,931, which was below the state average. The average administrators' salary of $62,432 was also below the

state average. In this district the instructional expenditure per pupil was $3,283. Operating expenditure per pupil was $5,629 (Illinois School Report Card, 2000).

The school district was in the process of exploring the feasibility of consolidating with a neighboring school district. Declining projected enrollment provided the motivation for this controversial investigation.

Site A Community Demographics

Students in the school district lived in two small villages and the surrounding rural areas. In previous years, both villages had suffered tornado damage and had relied on a strong community spirit to help rebuild the area. A state fish and wildlife area was located between the two villages.

Village 1 was home to the superintendent's office, the elementary school, and the high school. It had a population of 1,361 with 98.6% of these residents being White. Females comprised 51.1% of the population and slightly outnumbered the 48.9% male residents. The median age of the residents was 37.1 (Illinois InfoAtlas, 1990).

The school was the main focus for many of the residents. Village 1 was also home to two parks, one bank, two grocery stores, one lumber business, one gas station, one public library, two restaurants, one barber shop, one dry cleaner, one weekly newspaper, one insurance office, one chiropractor's office, one funeral home, one fertilizer business, and two specialty shops. Several churches added to the spiritual growth of the community. While these businesses, as well as agriculture, did account for some employment opportunities, many residents traveled to the nearby state capital to work in areas such as state government and health care. This close proximity drew

many residents to the city for employment, shopping, and entertainment, all of which had a detrimental effect on the small businesses in the village.

The 1990 Census reported median family income in Village 1 to be $32,188. Villagers classified as poor by this census accounted for 9.3% of the population. Residents holding professional jobs constituted 19.4% of the work force. Remaining residents were employed in the following classifications: technical 34.8%, service 15.1%, farming 4.0%, and other 26.7%. Unemployed villagers comprised 4.6% of the population (Illinois InfoAtlas, 1990).

Residents who were high school graduates constituted 36.9% of the population, whereas those who were not high school graduates accounted for 27.9% of the villagers. College graduates comprised 11.4% of the total population (Illinois InfoAtlas, 1990).

The median age of a home in Village 1 was 39 years with a median home value of $40,200. Families renting homes paid a median monthly rent of $369.00. Owners occupied 67.0% of the homes, and 8.6% of the homes were vacant. Mobile homes in the village numbered 70 (Illinois InfoAtlas, 1990).

Village 2 was home to the junior high school and had a population of 704 with 98.6% of the residents being White. The median age of the Village 2 resident was 35 years old (Illinois InfoAtlas, 1990).

This second village boasted two community parks, three churches, three restaurants, one bank, one insurance office, one gas station, and several beauty shops. As is the case with Village1, agriculture and businesses did account for some

employment opportunities; however, many residents traveled to nearby larger towns to earn their living.

The median family income for Village 2 was $26,932. This contributed to 12.5% of the population being classified as poor. Residents holding professional jobs accounted for 10.0% of the work force. Remaining residents were employed in the following classifications: technical 22.5%, service 14.1%, farming 4.8%, and other 48.6%. Unemployed residents constituted 9.8% of the population (Illinois InfoAtlas, 1990).

High School graduates represented 51.4% of the residents of Village 2, whereas 24.8% were not high school graduates. College graduates comprised only 4.5% of the population in this village (Illinois InfoAtlas, 1990).

The median age of a home in Village 2 was 56 years with a median home value of $23,300. Families renting homes paid a median monthly rent of $313.00. Owners occupied 70.3% of the homes, and 10.1% of the homes were vacant. Mobile homes provided 46 homes in the community (Illinois InfoAtlas, 1990).

Both Village 1 and Village 2 shared a rural atmosphere, strove for self-sufficiency, saw the school as one of the focal points in the community, and supported school activities with an emphasis on sports events.

Site B Building Description

Targeted Site B was a third through sixth grade attendance center housed in a one-story brick building built in 1998, replacing an older building that was in violation of life safety codes. Site B was one of three elementary buildings in a kindergarten through twelfth grade unit district. Students from a prekindergarten through grade four

attendance center in an outlying community attended fifth and sixth grades at Site B. Students from remaining district communities attended a prekindergarten through second grade center prior to their attendance at Site B.

The entry to the building was a two-story atrium leading to the office area. A glass ceiling provided natural lighting along the length of the area. The building, in use for the past three years, had a courtyard surrounded by a classroom wing both on the north and south, a library and computer lab on the west, and the office area on the east. The north wing housed the classrooms for grades three and four, while the south wing housed classrooms for grades five and six, along with offices and classrooms for the special education cooperative. A gymnasium, lunchroom, and fine arts wing extended eastward from the office area. A large playground with colorful, modern equipment sat off to the north between the school and a wooded nature area. Two parking areas were located at the entrance to the school on the south. The community Tree City committee planted new trees on the grounds yearly in honor or memory of local citizens and teachers. The targeted classroom was working on a project to landscape the inner courtyard with bushes, trees, and flowers that would attract birds and butterflies. The gymnasium served as the home court for junior high volleyball, basketball, and wrestling events in addition to the many Site B activities.

Site B Classroom Description

The targeted Site B was a fifth and sixth grade team classroom. Fifth graders studied reading, math, and science in the morning, and sixth grade students studied reading and science in the afternoon. A teacher in the next classroom shared in the

education of the students by teaching them social studies and language arts. Some of the students received services from the Title I and gifted teachers.

Classroom B had a cheerful appearance, with a mix of student work and motivational posters hung on the walls and ceiling. It was centrally located in the southern corridor, which was lined with student lockers. Two windows overlooked the courtyard, one on each end of the wall opposite the doorway. Two walls contained white boards, and a third wall supported a long work counter and computer center. The fourth wall contained built-in shelves, drawers, cabinets, and a counter. Students sat at desks placed in small groupings conducive to cooperative learning activities. Near one window, students enjoyed using the independent reading area; it had a rug and shelf for books. The classroom was also home to two cockatiels, hermit crabs, a hedgehog, and an aquarium with goldfish.

Site B Student Demographics

The total enrollment for Site B was 439 with a total of 1,499 students district wide. The average class size for fifth grade was 22.8, while the average for sixth grade was 21.2. Of the students at the site, 97.9% were White, 0.9% Black, 0.9% Hispanic, and 0.2% Asian or Pacific Islander. Children from families classified as low-income comprised 27.3% of the student population as compared to 21.6% district wide. This was an increase, which caused Site B to be eligible for additional Title I services. The school's attendance rate was 95.3%. The mobility rate was 11.4%, and seven chronically truant students gave the school a truancy rate of 1.7%. Site B's pupil to teacher ratio was 17.8 to 1. Parental involvement was valued at the school as evidenced by 99.7% of the parents having personal contact through parent teacher

conferences, open houses, family math and reading nights, volunteer opportunities, and other school visits (Illinois School Report Card, 2000).

Table 2 shows percentages of Site B's students' performance levels on state achievement tests. The percentages reflected all fifth grade students tested.

Table 2

State Achievement Test Results for Fifth Grade

Test Type	Academic Warning	Below Standards	Meets Standards	Exceeds Standards	% Tested
Reading	0%	22%	50%	27%	98%
Mathematics	6%	28%	52%	14%	98%
Writing	3%	12%	62%	23%	98%

Note. From Illinois School Report Card, 2000.

Site B Faculty and Staff Demographics

All of the teachers at Site B were White, as were all teachers of the district (Illinois School Report Card, 2000). There were 18 classroom teachers, 2 teacher aides, 2 individual aides, 1 clerk, 1 Title I teacher, 1 gifted teacher, 1 band director, and 5 special education teachers. The school shared two physical education teachers, two music teachers, one counselor, one hearing itinerant teacher, and one speech pathologist with other schools in the district. Of these, one classroom teacher, one music teacher, and both physical education teachers were male. The building also had a full-time female secretary, a male janitorial staff of two, and a female kitchen staff of five. All district buildings shared the school nurse.

Site B Programs Offered

Site B had four inclusion classrooms staffed with both a classroom teacher and a special education teacher. Several students in the building had physical disabilities. A

physical therapist and an occupational therapist provided special services to those students. Some children in traditional classrooms received special education services for reading and math as required by their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). They returned to their regular classroom for the other core subjects. The curriculum included instruction in reading, science, spelling, mathematics, social studies, language arts, and life skills.

Both fifth and sixth grade students attended special classes such as physical education, general music, and band held during separate one-hour blocks each morning. All students received 40 minutes of art instruction, 20 minutes of library class, and 30 minutes in the computer lab weekly. Each December, the student body performed a holiday musical production, and it held an art show each May. The fifth and sixth grade bands participated jointly with the junior high band in winter and spring concerts. RESPECT, a character building program incorporated in the school's discipline policy in 2000, contained the focus components of respect, etiquette, safety, pride, encouragement, character, and teamwork.

A before-and-after-school day care program was available at a competitive rate for students at Site B. The day care program continued throughout the summer as a full-day program and was held in conjunction with a similar program at the other local attendance center. The district served breakfast and lunch to students in each building. Many students qualified for free or reduced breakfast and lunch.

Students at this site also participated in many other academic activities. The Accelerated Reading Program (ARP) and Book It!, a reading program sponsored by Pizza Hut, were two of the extra activities. Fifth and sixth grade students participated in

Quiz Bowl, Geography Bee, Spelling Bee, Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics contest, Science Olympiad, Social Studies Olympiad, Language Arts Olympiad and literary contest each year. During fourth quarter, fifth grade classes utilized a math incentive program that taught students how to use a checkbook. Imaginary money was deposited or deducted from a student's account according to classroom rules. At the end of the school year, students attended a special auction conducted by a local auctioneer, and children with money in their account could bid upon various prizes.

Site B District Demographics

The targeted district for Site B was located in a small Midwestern community. In 1962, five of the county's small communities voted to form a consolidated unit district. The district served 1,499 prekindergarten through twelfth grade students from these communities. Workers in the district office included a superintendent, secretary, bookkeeper, and a cafeteria director who also served as the payroll clerk. With the superintendent, 5 full-time principals led the district's 89 teachers and 79 support personnel. Instructional expenditure per pupil was $3,145, and operating expenditure per pupil was $5,556. Both of these figures represented dollar amounts slightly lower than figures of any unit district of similar size (Illinois School Report Card, 2000).

Four buildings housed students in District Site B. An elementary prekindergarten through fourth grade attendance center was located in one of the communities served by the district. Students in fifth and sixth grades from this outlying community were bussed to Site B. All other buildings were in the main community and included a prekindergarten through second grade center, the targeted Site B building, and a junior high and high school complex, built in 1975. Located at the outskirts of town, residential

housing, government housing, cornfields, and a pond and nature facility, which included trails through dense woods and native plants, bordered the junior and senior high school complex and Site B building. The nature facility was used by district schools and also by the community.

Site B Community Demographics

Site B, the county seat, was located in a rural community on the banks and bluffs of a winding, historic river. According to Census 2000 information, the population of the town was 2,299 ("Census Figures," 2001). Not included in the census information were inhabitants of several large residential developments and a private lake, all outside city limits. The community was located two miles from a state historic site, which employed many of the area inhabitants. Residents of this community lived 25 miles from the state capital, a major employer of government workers, hospital and health care providers, business and other industries. The Site B community supported three gas stations, a car dealership, five family restaurants, five national fast food chains, two utility companies, one medical center, two car washes, one farm implement dealership, and two variety stores. Other businesses located in Community B included one grocery chain, one video store, one convenience store, two pharmacies, one auto-supply company, several legal offices, three taverns, and several antique stores. The town also supported two dentists, two hardware stores, several real estate offices, and two insurance offices. Other commercial and service industries included a television repair shop, many beauty shops, two laundromats, a public library, two tumbling and dance instruction facilities, two bed and breakfasts, a golf course, a veterinary clinic, a bank with three locations, a weekly newspaper, and two florist shops. Because the

community was located in a rich agriculture area, there were numerous family farms landscaping the district. The primary industries within the community included agriculture, business, education, county government, utilities, and a hydraulic manufacturing plant. Tourism was important to the community because of its close proximity to the state historic site and the state capital, also the home of a national historic site. The local state historic site was home to acres of wooded trails, picnic sites, and campsites in addition to a restored pioneer village visited by vacationers from all over the world.

In the Site B county, 78.9% of the residents were homeowners. The average family income was $42,678 (State and County QuickFacts, 2000). The average price of a home in the Site B community was $131,888.00 (G. Thomasma, personal communication, August 5, 2001). A number of rental homes were available, as well as apartment rentals located in three different complexes and a condominium development. Three governmental housing sites and a trailer park were located in the targeted community. Several new, upscale housing subdivisions were under construction, contributing to the county's rating as the fastest growing county in the state over the past decade ("Census Figures," 2001). Site B district officials hoped that growth would be realized in the near future with an increase in student population. Lack of this projected community growth was evidenced by the reduction in staff that occurred at the end of the previous school year.

An aldermanic form of government managed Site B's community. Local voters elected the mayor and council members. A major natural gas and electric supplier served city residents, with rural residents receiving services from the rural electric

cooperative or a farm services cooperative. Local water service was available to city homes as well as to homes in subdivisions adjacent to the city limits. A rural water cooperative was also under construction. A local police force, the county sheriff's department, and a volunteer fire department protected the community. Local and long-distance phone service, as well as cellular was available; however, 911 was not available for emergency response.

Residents may have attended the Catholic Church or one of twelve Protestant churches located within the community. Many others also chose to attend churches in the surrounding communities, and some chose to drive to the capital city to attend denominations not served by local churches. A small dissident faction of the Catholic Church had recently founded a private school housed in the old middle school building sold by the district when the new Site B was built.

The importance of education to the community was apparent by the recent approval of a referendum and construction of the new Site B building, along with recent additions and improvements to the other buildings in the district. Education was an important commodity as evidenced by the availability of higher educational opportunities within a 30-mile radius. A community college was located in the nearby state capital, with a branch in the targeted community offering a wide variety of classes in many different fields of study. Other educational institutions found in the capital city included a private junior college, a business college, a hospital college of nursing, a branch of a major state university, and a university school of medicine.

While education played an important part in the lives of Site B residents, there was also a strong following of various sporting events sponsored both by the school

district and the local community. Fall soccer and flag football programs were open to all youth ages 5 through 12, while many families drove into the capital to participate in leagues for older students. The local community offered boys' baseball and girls' softball programs each spring and summer. Boys played their games at the baseball and soccer sports complex recently named for a local teacher who had been instrumental in the youth sports programs offered locally. The girls had their own softball facilities as well. Various family members taught swimming lessons at their private pools each summer, and district staff members taught winter and summer swimming programs at the high school's indoor pool. The district also supported many sports including junior high and high school football, track, baseball, softball, basketball, wrestling, volleyball, and high school swimming. Historically, the community was well known for its winning junior high and high school cross county teams. Sixth grade students also participated in cross-country at the junior high level. The community had two tennis courts, one at a local park and one on the high school grounds. The county fairgrounds just north of town hosted racing events periodically throughout the summer as well as the annual county fair.

In addition to education and sports, the community placed great importance on the arts. The high school Thespians presented a fall play and a spring musical each year, and theatrical performances were held at the state historic site each summer. A county choral group had been in existence for a number of years. The local Parent Teacher Association (PTA) sponsored a talent show for families and students in kindergarten through sixth grade each winter. Many members of the targeted community took advantage of these varied theatrical opportunities. The community was

the boyhood home of one of the country's greatest modern poets and authors. His family home, a memorial museum, was open daily throughout the summer and by appointment the remainder of the year. His grave, located in one of the three major cemeteries within the community, attracted tourists from all over the world. Several other notable historic figures were also buried nearby.

The Site B community was very civic minded. Organizations included Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Kiwanis, Women's Club, Junior Women's Club, Garden Club, PTA, Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and County University Women. Several of these civic organizations maintained the various parks in the community, including a quaint rose garden and gazebo located at the southern entrance to the town. The high school Problem Solvers team had repeatedly won state, national, and international competitions for their community improvement work. They jointly sponsored a summer community festival with the local Chamber of Commerce. It often coincided with the school's annual homecoming celebrations and various special functions at the state historic site. The Problem Solvers team had also worked with the local Rotary members to furnish playground equipment for a new park located in the river flood plain.

Site C Building Description

Site C was an elementary school building set in a quiet, small town in the Midwest. Originally built in 1952, the building was damaged by a tornado in 1995. Construction was begun in 1996 to remodel the school building. In addition, more classroom space was built to accommodate an increasing student population. Farmland, a community park, and a two-lane state highway surrounded the school.

Attractive flower gardens decorated the front entrance of Site C. The building was pleasant to look at with large windows housing an atrium in the entrance hall. Bordering the atrium was an area containing the administrative offices. Three wings connected to the atrium. One wing housed the prekindergarten through first grade classrooms, the multipurpose room, and smaller rooms used for Title I, speech, music, and the school psychologist. Another wing housed the second grade through fourth grade classrooms, computer lab, special education rooms, and the teachers' lounge and workroom. The third wing was home to the gymnasium and cafeteria. Colorful recreational equipment was constructed behind the school. A community park with additional play equipment and a large, grassy, picnic area was located adjacent to the school grounds.

This facility catered to children in prekindergarten through fourth grade. It housed two prekindergarten classrooms and three classrooms each for first, second, and third grade. Kindergarten and fourth grade had had an increase in student population resulting in the addition of a fourth classroom for each of those age groups.

Site C Classroom Description

The targeted classroom was larger than the average schoolroom. Located in the older section of the school building, it had high ceilings and many built-in cabinets for storage. Small windows that opened to the east looked out to the highway. The windows, however, were too high for children to look outside. The room did not have air conditioning, and ventilation was poor on hot days. Another kindergarten classroom, the girls' restroom, and the multipurpose room were located adjacent to the Site C classroom. An exit to the building was within 30 feet of the classroom.

The classroom was a busy place with child-led enthusiasm. A large, colorful rug placed on one side of the room served as an area for group work. Students actively participated in authentic learning and center experiences, such as enacting dramatic play, experimenting with manipulatives, creating art projects, listening to books on tapes, making graphs, writing letters, journaling, and reading. Children freely visited centers of their choice. Finished projects adorned the walls both inside and outside the room.

Site C Student Demographics

Site C had a total enrollment of 443 students. These students were from two counties. Low-income students accounted for 20.3% of the focus school and 15.3% of the district. The student attendance rate was 95.8% with a mobility rate of 4.8%. The chronic truancy rate was 0.3%, with 1 chronically truant student. Ethnic background of students was 97.1% White, 1.1% Black, 0.9% Hispanic and 0.9% Asian or Pacific Islander. The average class size for both kindergarten and first grade was 24 students, and the average class size for third and fourth grades respectively was 20 and 21 students (Illinois School Report Card, 2000). Table 3 displays the results of the state achievement test for third grade students in reading, mathematics, writing, and science. These scores represent all students tested.

Table 3

State Achievement Test Results for Third Grade

Test Type	Academic Warning	Below Standards	Meets Standards	Exceeds Standards	%Tested
Reading	8%	39%	43%	10%	96%
Mathematics	13%	31%	51%	5%	98%
Writing	4%	57%	39%	0%	94%
Science	0%	32%	58%	10%	99%

Note. From Illinois School Report Card, 2000.

Site C District Demographics

The school employed 53 people, 35 of whom were certified. The teachers' ethnic background was100% White, which reflected the student population's ethnic background. Male teachers accounted for 35% of the teaching staff in the district. This was a gender difference of 10% as compared to the state's male teacher population. Teachers in the district had an average 15.6 years of experience. Thirty percent of the teachers in this district had their master's degree or additional education. The average teacher salary was $37,484.00 per school year. The instructional expenditure per pupil was $3,434.00 per school year, about one thousand dollars less than the state's average expenditures (Illinois School Report Card, 2000).

Site C Programs Offered

Site C was designated as a Title One school and was affiliated with a special program. The HEART program paired an adult volunteer with an at-risk first grade reader, meeting four days each week to read for one half hour. Another literacy program for all students was Book IT!, a program that encouraged children to read a required number of books each month. The children received a pizza coupon for their

reading accomplishments. Site C was also involved in The Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics (ITCM) activities. Third and fourth grade students participated in individual and group activities, earning scores that could lead them to qualify for a statewide competition.

The four kindergarten classes covered the curriculum through the use of themes. For approximately 50% of the day, children worked in theme related centers of their choice. The balance of the day was spent with whole group instruction or individualized work. Students also participated in physical education, music, computer, and library classes weekly.

Kindergarten teachers at Site C worked together to provide a unified kindergarten program. When visiting any of the kindergarten classes, one would see common activities in each room. These similar educational opportunities allowed kindergartners mutual experiences for conversations at lunch or recess.

Goals for the previous school year included focusing on student reading and writing, building a positive atmosphere in the school, making the computer lab and technology an important tool for student learning, and increasing parental involvement with the learning process of their children (Illinois School Report Card, 2000).

Keeping parents informed was a priority at this site. Both the principal and all classroom teachers sent home weekly newsletters. Parents participated in their child's classroom by making weekly visits, attending field trips, or viewing special school activities via a video sent home with students.

Site C Community Demographics

The focus towns were delightful places to live, boasting of small town spirit. There was a strong historical flavor to the region. Tourism was a major element to life in both counties as evidenced by several local museums and parks recognizing state and national historic figures.

Of the two counties, one was among the smallest in the state. The other county was home to the state capital. The majority of residents lived outside the township areas. Local real estate information listed the average home value in this area at $129,000.00 (G. Thomasma, personal communication, August 5, 2001). Most of the residents worked at state jobs or in agricultural based employment.

The unit district was set in two towns. The targeted school town had a population of 139 residents; this number was up 13% from the 1990 census ("Census Figures," 2001). It was a residential area with one church and two retail establishments. The unit office, middle school, and high school were located in one building in a town approximately three miles away from Site C. This community had a population of 1,726 residents, up 22.9% from the previous census ("Census Figures," 2001).

The larger of the two towns had 23 retail shops. While driving through the community, a visitor would see a total of six churches, two taverns, a bank, a funeral home, a health center, two insurance offices, a library, a grocery and video store, and a veterinarian clinic (Athens City Hall, 2001). Because of the proximity to the state capital, many residents visited the city for shopping and entertainment. This caused a hardship on local retail owners and gave rise to a local issue of keeping the economic

life of the area lucrative. Even though the school district was growing and the 2000 census showed a 35.9% increase in area population ("Census Figures," 2001), economic factors continued to be a problem because of close proximity to the capital.

National Context of the Problem

Assessment has long been a widely debated issue in the field of education. Student performance traditionally has been reported to parents in the form of letter or percentage grades resulting from conventional assessments. This type of reporting represents what a teacher thinks about a student's work, but it does not specify to what or to whom the student's work is being compared, what criteria was used to determine the letter grade, or what specific aspect of the subject was assessed (Wiggins, as cited in Burke, 1992). Letter and percentage grades represent a student's performance at one point in time and should not be the only means of connoting growth (Glazer, 1998). Students and parents, therefore, are not provided with the specific information they need to improve academic performance.

Paper and pencil tests, letter grades, and percentage grades are longstanding traditions that have endured numerous attempts to alter the grading process. It is clear that changing these American institutions is not an easy task (Marzano, 2000). Grades have been scrutinized since the turn of the century. In the book, Transforming Classroom Grading, Robert Marzano (2000) stated, "Educational researchers and theorists have been highly critical of traditional grading practices for some time" (p.3). Historical research showed grades were originally used to sort and rank students from the highest achiever to the lowest achiever, while diminishing the importance of the level of achievement attained by each student (Stiggins, 1997). As early as 1913, I.E.

Finkelstein expressed strong concerns regarding the validity and reliability of grading practices. An attempt to alter grading policies was made in 1933 by Warner Middleton. In 1971, Lee Cronbach noted the problems inherent in using reading and writing tests which had changed very little in thirty years (as cited in Marzano, 2000).

Decades have passed and the grading issue is still viewed by researchers and educators as problematic. Marzano (2000) detailed three main problems associated with assigning grades. One problem noted was that the percentage of academic achievement and nonacademic factors combined to calculate grades was not defined or consistent across the nation. For example, one teacher may calculate a student's score based solely on the assigned material. A different teacher may include such nonacademic factors as behavior, participation, or effort when grading a similar assignment. Another problem discussed was the weight given to various aspects of an assignment. Results can vary when teachers assign different weights to the content portion and to the language and mechanics of the work. Marzano also stated that when one grade is assigned to represent a wide array of skills and abilities, the information provided is indistinct. A great deal of knowledge about the performance of the student is lost when one score depicts the total work. Parents looking at a math grade on a report card may be unaware of the specific skills covered during that grading period.

Wiggins (1990) stated that conventional styles of testing do not allow students to record their reasons for selecting the answer. This single answer, paper-and-pencil testing style may hide the fact that the student does not fully understand the concept being taught. These traditional testing and reporting techniques make it difficult for students to demonstrate the depth of their understanding. Parents find it difficult to

interpret the range of progress made by their child when conventional styles of testing and reporting are the sole form of communication used by educators.

Traditional assessments reflect an outdated view of classrooms, restrict goals for learning, and do not incorporate self-assessment techniques (Tierney, 1991). Current learning theories, activities in which students engage on a daily basis, and abilities necessary to be successful in life are not represented in conventional testing strategies (Chen & Martin, 2000). State mandates for assessments that emphasize higher-order thinking and real world application have caused teachers to be more aware of various alternative assessments (Mertler, 1999).

Stiggins (1997) noted that teachers spend nearly two-thirds of their classroom time assessing and evaluating students. Similarly, students spend a significant amount of their time on the assessment process. It is estimated that every child in the country receives more than 2,000 test items per year. Every year, 14 hours is devoted to preparing students to take standardized tests, 6 hours to preparing for commercial tests, 6 hours for state testing, and 2 hours for district testing. In addition, 26 hours are devoted yearly for basal tests and 18 hours for teacher-made tests. Research shows that time spent on test preparation does not equal valuable learning time for the student, and it does not increase the teachers' instructional skills (Tierney, 1991). Linda McNeil's research noted that achievement tests measure low quality schoolwork and contribute little to students' academic advancement (as cited in Glasser, 1993). In 1989, it was noted in the Los Angeles Times that a group of California students acted out against standardized tests. The students undermined their scores by failing the test in order to send a message to administrators that too much emphasis was placed on exams (as

cited in Glasser, 1993). Even the students were aware of the negative aspects of traditional testing.

Providing parents with a test score, grade point average, or class ranking obtained through the use of traditional forms of assessment supplies little information about what their child knows and understands. This type of assessment does not accurately measure the strengths and weaknesses of the child (Dutt-Doner & Maddox, 1988). If educators expect students to improve their academic performance, both students and parents must be supplied with clearly stated goals and explicit information regarding the range of progress the student makes while striving to meet those goals. If feedback is not provided, correction and progress cannot be made (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Valencia suggests dependence upon one type of assessment tool, excluding all others, deprives students of valuable learning opportunities (as cited in Fredericks, 1997).

CHAPTER 2
PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Students and parents in the three targeted districts had historically depended upon traditional letter grade assessments and resulting report cards to document student achievement. These grades did not provide students with adequate information to improve the level of performance. Traditional means of reporting progress did not provide enough concrete information to enable parents to assist their child in improving academic skills. Teachers noted discrepancies between the standards-based curriculum and the traditional reporting system. Administrators voiced concerns about inconsistencies in traditional methods of reporting student achievement. Teachers conducting the research elected to determine the scope of dissatisfaction with limitations of conventional methods used to report student progress. Data were collected from student, parent, teacher, and administrator surveys as well as from student interviews.

Probable Causes

Confidential surveys were distributed during class to 65 targeted fifth and sixth grade students at the beginning of the intervention for the purpose of determining their thoughts regarding the traditional grading process (Appendix A). As shown in Table 4,

most students understand the importance of report cards. An overwhelming majority of students surveyed also indicated their parents placed great importance on grades. Thirty percent of students reported receiving money or special privileges for receiving above average grades as well as losing money or privileges for below average grades. Many targeted students expressed personal concerns and were physically affected by grades. One student responded with the comment, "Report cards just tell you what you do wrong." Another student said, " I don't like report cards because when they come, I get worried, and I can't do my work."

Table 4

Student Report Card Attitude Survey Responses

Survey Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think report cards are important.	63%	22%	0.08%	0.05%	0.02%
My parents think report cards are important.	68%	18%	13%	0%	0%
Report cards reflect the effort I give in class.	43%	27%	13%	12%	0.03%
Report cards show improvement I have made.	48%	42%	0.08%	12%	0%
Report cards give information to my parents that will show them how to help me in school.	55%	23%	15%	0.07%	0.02%

Interviews were conducted with targeted kindergarten students (Appendix B). Results of the interviews indicated students at this grade level did not have an

understanding of assessment and resulting letter grades. When asked, "What is a test?" one kindergarten student responded, "Something that you race in." Another youngster suggested a test is "...a thing where you have to work really, really hard." Of the students surveyed, 69% stated they had taken a test. Responses to the question, "What did you find out when you took a test?" varied. "I found out I couldn't swim good," said one student. "It was fun," replied another. When asked if they knew what grades were, typical responses were "...first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade."

Parents are an integral part of the educational process. A confidential survey was sent to 160 parents of kindergarten, fifth, and sixth grade students in the three targeted school districts at the beginning of the intervention period (Appendix C). The survey examined parents' thoughts about the report cards they received when they were in school and thoughts concerning report cards received by their own children. Of the surveys distributed, 74% were returned. The majority of the parents participating were between the ages of 26 and 41 years. Most homes surveyed reported two children living in a four-person household. Adults in the homes reported a variety of occupations. More than one-half of the parents involved in the survey continued education after high school. Most attended a junior college, technical, or trade school. The highest level of education reported was a Ph.D. The greatest number of those providing information stated they received letter grade report cards during school years. Seventy-five percent of the respondents indicated report cards received reflected the effort they put forth, and 61% noted the single grade represented the knowledge they gained as a student. Slightly more than half, 53%, of the parents surveyed noted their report card helped

them understand the strengths and weaknesses they demonstrated as a student. One parent, however, commented, "I didn't really understand my strengths and weaknesses until I was in college, and by then it was a little late to worry about!"

When questioned about the style of report card received by their children, parents stated both single letter report cards and checklists were commonly used to report progress. An overwhelming majority of parents responding, 82%, indicated their child's report card reflected effort put forth, while 75% believed knowledge gained was illustrated by the report card issued to their child. When questioned about whether or not report cards help parents understand their child's strengths and weaknesses, 73% of those responding concluded the type of report card their child received conveyed their child's strengths and weaknesses. When specifically questioned about traditional single letter grade report cards, 48% indicated report cards reflected student effort, while 39% believed this type of reporting did not provide an accurate picture of student effort. One parent commented, "I don't believe that effort has ever been reported on report cards. Some children could put 110% effort into school, and they still may not be able to receive a good letter grade." Sixty-nine percent of parents providing information were satisfied that single letter grade report cards informed them of student improvement. Several parents, however, mentioned a desire for written as well as verbal information noting improvement needed or achieved.

Information gathered from the parent survey suggested parents were satisfied with most aspects of traditional forms of reporting student achievement. This led the teachers conducting the research to conclude parents may not have been aware of many of the shortcomings associated with traditional progress reports. The one area,

however, parents did note as a concern was related to information provided to assist student improvement. Of those responding to the survey, 50% did not think these reports provided enough specific feedback to assist their child in improving classroom performance. One parent commented, "Is the grade due to lack of prior knowledge, not being prepared for tests, incomplete work, etc.? It would be helpful to know these things so we can help our kids improve." Another parent indicated they would find a checklist helpful because it would help ". . .show where we need to work with our children. That way, even if the child gets all A's and B's, we can tell where they haven't picked up on things."

Parents are not the only participants in the educational process with concerns about traditional means of reporting progress. Informal conversations with coworkers regarding assessment procedures led the researchers to conclude that teachers see a need for augmenting the traditional letter grade report cards with information gained from alternative forms of assessment. The teachers conducting this research provided confidential surveys to colleagues teaching in all three targeted school districts at the beginning of the intervention to determine the extent of dissatisfaction with traditional forms of assessment and the resulting letter grade report cards (Appendix D).

Coworkers in the three targeted school districts returned 117 surveys to the researchers. Of those surveys returned, teachers in the range of 22 to 29 years completed 22 of the surveys. Thirty teachers in the 30 to 39 year range provided information. Twenty-eight teachers participating in the survey were 40 to 49 years while 34 were in the 50 to 59 year range. Two colleagues were 60 or above. One colleague did not complete the age category.

Professionals replying to the survey had accumulated from 1 to 34 years of experience. In addition, one teacher with 50 years of experience provided input. Two categories had significantly more respondents than others. Those with three years of experience responded the most often, with nine responses. Eight teachers with 20 years of experience completed the survey.

Grade levels from prekindergarten to high school were represented in the completed surveys. Special education, art, music, physical education teachers and counselors also provided information. Elementary classroom teachers returned the largest number of surveys followed by junior high and high school. The smallest area of participation was teachers who were not classified as classroom teachers.

Teachers were asked to recall the report cards they had received during their years as a student. The overwhelming majority stated they had received letter grades on report cards. As illustrated in Table 5, even though teachers believed the report cards they received as a student reflected their knowledge gained, effort and improvement, they indicated those reports did not show their strengths and weaknesses.

Table 5

Teacher Opinions of Report Cards They Received as Students

Survey Statement	Total Agree	No Opinion	Total Disagree
The report card I received reflected my effort.	74%	3%	23%
The report card I received reflected the knowledge I gained.	60%	7%	33%
The report card I received helped me understand my strengths and my weaknesses.	44%	5%	51%

Table 6 depicts opinions expressed by teachers concerning assessments they prepare for their students. As shown on the table, most teachers were willing to incorporate alternative forms of assessment into present grading systems. The larger than expected amount of "no opinion" responses indicated a surprising apathy by some teachers toward assessment processes.

Table 6

Teacher Opinions of Assessments They Prepare for Students

Survey Statement	Total Agree	No Opinion	Total Disagree
I would be willing to incorporate the use of rubrics into my assessment plans.	89%	5%	5%
I would be willing to incorporate the use of checklists into my assessment plans.	91%	4%	5%
I would be willing to incorporate the use of portfolios into my assessment plans.	69%	13%	18%
I prefer to use single-letter grade report cards only.	27%	24%	49%
Single-letter grade report cards reflect student effort.	31%	8%	61%
Single-letter grade report cards reflect student improvement.	38%	12%	50%
Single-letter grade report cards furnish information that helps parents provide necessary support to assist a child in improving classroom performance.	14%	4%	81%

Comments written by teachers on the survey indicated some teachers are already using alternative forms of assessment. Others believed such assessments would be too time consuming because some teachers see more than 100 students per day. Teachers indicated that supplementing traditional report cards with written comments could be an effective means of communication. Remarks suggested some teachers ranked traditional report cards as effective means of reporting because they

already made written additions to the letter grade reports. Other responses revealed teachers agreed with alternative assessments in theory but were not properly trained in the use of such tools. A colleague commented, "Obviously I am very 'pro' for portfolios and rubrics. I am unsure how to implement [sic]." Several teachers stated a need for both traditional and alternative assessments. One teacher commented, "I think a variety of assessment tools more adequately reflect a student's progress." Positive comments were made about rubrics, portfolios, and checklists. One teacher stated, "I do use rubrics in my writing assessment, and it has helped a lot in the evaluation." Another educator indicated, "I currently use a rubric-based assessment card for my classes, and it has proven to be quite effective for students, parents, and myself." An instructor using portfolios reported, "Portfolios show student strengths. Parents were very excited to see accomplishments."

Administrators also play an integral role in the educational process. One administrator from a targeted district voiced a concern about the lack of continuous progress shown on traditional report cards between grading periods. This led the teachers conducting the research to include administrators in the confidential survey process (Appendix E).

The majority of administrators participating were between the ages of 40 to 49 years, serving in that position for 11 or fewer years. The survey results indicated administrators did not recommend the exclusive use of letter grade report cards, but advocated the use of rubrics, checklists, and portfolios in the classroom. As seen in Figure 1, administrators, parents, and teachers all agreed that traditional report cards do not provide adequate feedback to assist the child in improving academic skills.

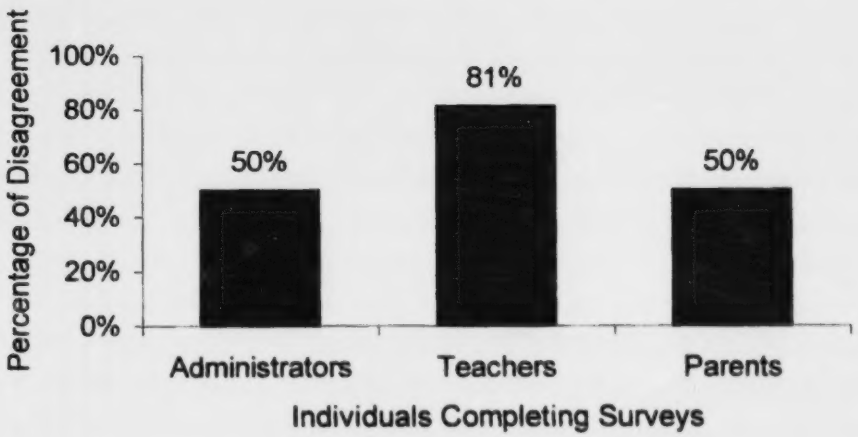

Figure 1. Percentage of administrators, teachers and parents who disagree with the statement, "Single letter grade report cards furnish information that helps parents provide the necessary support to assist their child in improving his or her classroom performance."

Literature Review

A search of literature suggested other educators shared concerns about traditional methods of reporting progress. According to Hudson and Penta (1998), current educational research encouraged teaching to multiple intelligences and integrating subjects, yet teachers were often expected to translate these practices into number and letter grades. One of the problems noted with these grades was they did not lend themselves to illustrating higher-order thinking skills promoted in current research. Without the addition of alternative assessment, teachers were asked to teach using one technique and to assess using traditional methods. This created discrepancies between teaching and assessment. For example, during class instruction many teachers incorporated questions requiring students to use synthesis or analysis

skills. The same students were then expected to use lower level thinking skills to answer true or false and multiple-choice questions.

Marzano (2000) stated letter grades did not give continuous feedback but assessed learning periodically. This type of grading system had little or no research to support its continuation. He suggested it was an ineffective method to assess students.

Today's emphasis on standardized testing using multiple choice questions has taught students there is only one correct answer to every question. Students have learned the value of recall and rote learning, but research showed this type of learning was not transferable to real-life situations (Moorcroft, Desmarias, & Hogan, 2000).

In the book, How to Assess Authentic Learning, Burke (1999) expressed a concern about traditional testing and reporting because this form of assessment did not reflect what a student could and could not do. Another concern voiced by Burke was the difficulty teachers had in translating what they knew about a student into one letter grade. One single letter grade could not convey the complex skills and standards students were required to demonstrate. As a result, students often did not fully understand what information their grade conveyed.

Bol, Stephenson, O'Connell, and Nunnery (1998) stated the difference between traditional and alternative assessment practices was traditional evaluations assessed only discrete and measurable behaviors. This caused the focus to be on the products of learning rather than on the process. A student who could provide an answer to a math problem, for example, but could not explain the process used to obtain the answer may not have fully comprehended the skill. Using alternative forms of assessment would give

students the means to demonstrate in a concrete manner the abstract thought process used to determine the answer.

The literature also revealed concerns about reliability and consistency of traditional assessment procedures. Adams (1998) believed while traditional testing had a place in quantitative assessment, it did not provide information about a child's understanding and learning. According to a local newspaper, several nearby schools were in the process of changing their report card format. The assistant school superintendent indicated the revision was undertaken due to the fact "...letter grades weren't specific enough when assessing students' performance on so many different standards. The teachers came to us and said, 'Everything we're teaching in the classroom doesn't connect with how we report to parents.'" A principal stated, "The old system really didn't tell us much. I could look at a B at different schools, and a B would not mean that much to me" (Daily, 2001, p. A4).

In summary, results of surveys completed by parents, teachers and administrators at all three sites indicated the practice of relying solely on traditional forms of assessment did not provide adequate information for parents to assist students in improving academic performance. This point of view was confirmed by a thorough search of professional literature. Inadequacies related to discrepancies between standards-based curriculum and single letter grades, inconsistencies in conventional methods of reporting student achievement, and the lack of continuous feedback provided by traditional forms of assessment were shortcomings of conventional reporting encountered during the literature search. In addition, the teachers conducting

the research discovered further concerns related to single letter grade reporting as well as a number of possible alternatives to traditional assessment.

CHAPTER 3

ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF ASSESSMENT

Literature Review

We live in an age of instant communication. Worldwide television coverage via satellite, voice mail, cellular phones, and the Internet have made communication in our country as easy as turning on a light. The availability of this technology has fostered a need for immediate communication. Instantaneous communication cultivates the necessity for effectual interchange of information in all professions. Effective communication is a vital component of the educational process.

One of the ways teachers communicate with students and parents is through grades and report cards. While parents expect their children to be graded in school, the limitations of communicating through grades alone are becoming increasingly evident (Stiggins, 1997). Concerns about using traditional letter grade report cards as the sole means of communication with parents have been raised in much of the recent educational literature. Cunningham and Allington (1999) reported parents find teacher written comments to be the most informative section of traditional report cards. These researchers recommended replacing report cards with written essays. Wiggins (1994) indicated report cards do not provide enough information about the tasks students

actually perform or fail to perform. The traditional report card does not give enough specific information about the level of performance and progress a student makes toward district, state or exit-level standards. Wiggins stated that, while we are interested in scores, we should also be concerned with a student's progress over time.

> I am not advocating the end of the use of letter grades on report cards. Letter grades, per se, are not the problem. Using a single grade with no clear and stable meaning to summarize all aspects of performance *is* a problem. We need more, not fewer grades; and more different kinds of grades if the parent is to be informed. (Wiggins, 1994, p. 29)

Shaklee, Barbour, Ambrose, and Hansford (1997) questioned whether a percentage grade on a quiz can indicate the areas in which a child needs help or the areas the child has mastered. Cunningham and Allington (1999) confirmed report cards are not informative for parents, especially parents of children categorized as at-risk students.

Early educational practices focused on simple memorization and recognition of facts. Current practices encourage the use of higher-order thinking skills that are more meaningful to life. In light of these changes, educators need to evaluate how to ascertain and communicate student progress (Harp,1994). Traditional assessment techniques do not lend themselves to the evaluation of state mandated higher-order thinking skills. The methods educators now use to inform parents of student performances have not paralleled changes in educational philosophy.

The purpose of assessment, according to Burke (1997), is " . . . to provide feedback to the students and parents about how well students are doing in meeting

their objectives, goals, or standards" (p. 186-187). Additionally, Burke (1999) and Fredericks, Blake-Line, and Kristo (1997) both concluded assessment is an ongoing process. Bickart, Jablon and Dodge (1999) stated tying assessment closely to curriculum and instruction affords teachers and students the opportunity to collect information. When data is shared with parents, it depicts an in-depth portrait of the student, their learning, and the progress being made. Gronlund (1998) defined three types of assessment: alternative, performance and authentic assessment. Alternative types of assessments are methods other than traditional pencil and paper tests where students complete multiple choice, short answer, or true and false questions. Performance assessments require students to execute a set of tasks demonstrating comprehension and procedural knowledge. Authentic assessment applies the understanding of skills to life tasks. It is important to emphasize the learning process, rather than the end product (Culbertson & Jalongo, 1999).

While many educators are excited about the possibilities of alternative assessment, the topic is controversial. Areas of concern include time constraints, subjectivity, validity, economic issues, cultural bias, and contemporary trends. Chen and Martin (2000) made note of limitations associated with authentic assessment. These included the amount of time necessary to develop, administer, and score performance assessments. Given the fact that performance assessment often evaluates the process and not the product, the final judgment is made at the time of the presentation. It is not feasible to score the product at a later time. One suggested solution to this limitation was to restrict the use of performance assessment to small groups of students. Subjectivity was cited as a problem that could be reduced by

requiring teachers to have a clear statement of the expectations for the project prior to the evaluation. The same performance assessment has the potential to be evaluated quite differently depending upon teacher bias, expectations, and inconsistent standards (Oosterhof, 1994 as cited in Chen & Martin, 2000). Hanna (1993, as cited in Chen & Martin, 2000) noted questions related to reliability of scoring given the fact that performance assessments generally represent what the student produced at only one point in time. Chen and Martin (2000) suggested multiple observations over a period of time could alleviate this problem.

Cizek (1991) joined educators who share the opinion authentic assessment is a trend. He was adamant that educators had a professional responsibility to scrutinize the costs, claims, and characteristics of performance assessment before endorsing the practice. Cizek further contended there had not been adequate rationale for widespread change and investment of resources. It was his contention the cost of implementing performance assessments would be substantial. Another problematic issue noted by Cizek was the potential for performance assessments to be considered culturally biased. He questioned whether such an assessment would be considered to be an advance or regression in testing.

Terwilliger (1997, as cited in Newman, 1998) questioned not only the data supporting the validity of authentic assessment, but also the quality of knowledge and basic skills tested by this method. In addition, he believed the use of the term authentic assessment denoted superiority and was thus misleading.

Wiggins (1994), a champion of alternative assessments, argued for a balance between assessment of performance and traditional tasks. He compared information

reported on a baseball card to information reported on a student report card. "Who would feel confident giving a single letter grade to each ballplayer, given twelve data categories? Such reduction to a single grade is arbitrary--even if computed 'objectively'--whether in baseball or in school" (p. 34). Bickart et al. (1999) agreed with the need for balance and cautioned educators must not relay to parents only whether or not a student has made progress, but must also inform parents how their child's progress compares to expectations for others of the same age or grade level. Sharing with parents only the information regarding progress could be misleading.

These findings in the literature challenged the teachers conducting this research to investigate different types of alternative assessment in order to communicate student performance more effectively. One alternative assessment encountered in the literature was the use of portfolios. Stiggins (1997) explained portfolios could be an effective system of communication. The purpose of portfolios is to identify any special needs, relate student progress, and indicate accountability (Shaklee et al., 1997). Tierney, Carter, and Desai (1991) suggested the following elements for inclusion in a student portfolio: projects; reports; favorite poems, songs or letters; samples of writing in progress; finished samples of writing; records of books read; and student reflections or self-evaluations. Slavin (1997) recommended collecting items showing a child's progress, as well as optional artifacts showing a student's unique strategies, strengths, and weaknesses. Items placed in the portfolio show effort made by the student and can reveal what is important to that student (Tierney et al., 1991).

Parental involvement is a positive aspect of using portfolios. By examining their child's work, parents can better understand the child's strengths and weaknesses and

can view progress over time (Moorcroft, Desmarais, & Hogan, 2000). Portfolios provide a foundation for discussion and a concrete example of the child's work, emphasizing the child's success instead of failure (Grace, 1992). It is more purposeful to share specific examples of student progress with parents than it is to provide parents with a letter grade of B+ or S for satisfactory. Parents can personally appraise the level of their child's performance when they view samples of work collected over time. Seeing a child progress from writing only single words to writing whole sentences is much more powerful than seeing a letter grade for the subject of language arts (Bickart et al., 1999). Another positive aspect of portfolios is students become involved in the learning process by helping to make decisions and explanations about what is placed in the portfolio (Harp, 1994). In the book, Designing Professional Portfolios for Change, Burke (1997) commented that portfolios are popular because they show " . . . growth in concrete form as opposed to scattered worksheets or grade book entries" (p. 53).

Another recommended alternative to traditional assessment is the rubric. According to Goodrich (1997) a rubric is a scoring tool that lists the criteria for the assignment. The rubric describes gradations of quality for each criterion, from excellent to poor. Rubrics state specific goals that facilitate fairness and impartiality when assessing student work (Bickart et al., 1999). Woloshen (1999) suggested students help build the rubric. This gives students some control, understanding, and a sense of ownership of the evaluation criteria. Bickart et al. were convinced this involvement with establishing clear expectations motivates children to strive to produce the best product.

Lack of student motivation is a problem often cited by educators. Bickart et al. (1999) found incomplete information regarding the criteria being used to evaluate work

is one reason students lack motivation. Rubrics provide teachers and children with clear, shared understanding of the quality of work and expectations for performance for the assignment given. "Classroom rubrics are powerful learning motivators that make explicit goals and expectations and enhance fairness and objectivity in assessment " (Guthrie and Wigfield, 1997, as cited in Bickart et al., 1999, p. 199). Rubrics have an effect on the quality of student work. During the course of an assignment, a student can monitor progress toward meeting the expectations clearly stated. Rubrics can be an effective means of communicating with parents, giving them the tools necessary to assist their child with assignments (Woloshen, 1999). Bickart et al. (1999) found the use of rubrics to be an effective way to provide parents with concrete information about teacher expectations for the task assigned. Marzano's (2000) research indicated using rubrics enhanced student achievement by 32 percentile points. His research suggested using rubrics as a more accurate representation of student achievement than traditional scores.

Observation checklists are another form of alternative assessment suggested in the literature. According to Burke (1999), a checklist is a quick and easy system to monitor specific skills or behaviors prior to the final evaluation. Culbertson and Jalongo (1999) indicated checklists helped teachers to assess whether all areas of curriculum had been evaluated. Cockrum and Castillo (as cited in Harp, 1994) stated observation of students and use of checklists enabled teachers to provide a less stressful assessment environment for students. Checklists focus on the positive approach and offer the students a place of power. Stiggins (1997) suggested while checklists lack depth of information, they are quick and easy when using a large number of criteria.

Checklists are an effective communication tool. This assessment strategy can alert students, parents, and teachers to areas of concern offering time to make improvements (Burke, 1999).

Current educational research indicates students increase academic performance when they are given the opportunity to evaluate their own strengths, weaknesses, and level of achievement (Stiggins, 1999). Two formative assessment tools that enable students to process what they have learned are learning logs and reflective journals. These two self-assessment strategies reinforce reflective teaching and learning by providing opportunities for students to construct knowledge for themselves (Burke, 1999). Learning logs are collections of paragraphs written by students upon completion of a lesson for the purpose of summarizing what they have learned (Fredericks et al., 1997). Responses in these logs are concise, objective, factual, and impersonal (Burke, 1999). Teachers can learn much about a student's academic self-concept when reading logs which reflect, analyze, describe and evaluate learning experiences, successes, and challenges (Stiggins, 1999). Learning logs are useful tools for interpreting student performance. Teachers can ascertain during the instructional phase of the lesson whether students are processing information or if they are experiencing confusion and misunderstanding regarding presented material. Journals differ from learning logs because they are free flowing, subjective, personal and reflective. This type of assessment instrument is often used to connect what is being studied in the classroom with life outside of the classroom (Burke, 1999). Research indicates writing plays a major role in comprehension (Glazer, 1998). Burke (1999) concurred that using logs and journals as alternative forms of assessment not only provide a means of

interpreting student performance but also can aid in improving the performance. Students have the opportunity to retain key ideas and improve writing skills when logs and journals are used in the classroom assessment plan.

Interviews, conferences, and exhibitions are other ways to assess student performance. Communication skills are dominant in many state goals. Speaking and listening are important life skills (Burke, 1997). Burke stated teachers could gain valuable insight into student comprehension by simply talking with or interviewing the student (1999). Traditionally the term conference has referred to a meeting between the teacher and parents. This concept is evolving to include the practice of teachers holding conferences with students. A teacher and student conference can provide an opportunity for the teacher to observe the student, provide insights about the way the student thinks, and afford the opportunity to gather information that can be used to individualize instruction (Bickart et al., 1999). Stiggins (1999) stated involving students in the traditional parent and teacher conference is also important. He indicated using student-led conferences is one of the biggest communication discoveries in the last century and is convinced having students tell about their success can be very motivational (Stiggins, 1997). Conversely, telling about poor achievement can promote a desire to produce better quality work. Bickart et al. (1999) concurred with the practice of involving students in conferences with their families. It motivates families to attend meetings and stimulates students in developing a sense of responsibility for levels of performance. A search of the literature revealed exhibitions showcase the student's accomplishments and allow them to demonstrate knowledge to others in a tangible way (Culbertson & Jalongo, 1999).

Project Objectives and Processes

Parents, teachers, and administrators have voiced concerns about the limitations of traditional assessment techniques and the resulting grades. A thorough search of current educational literature further documented these limitations.

The teachers conducting the research will use various forms of alternative assessments to compliment information presented on traditional report cards. As a result of incorporating alternative forms of assessment into the existing classroom assessment process, students and parents of the targeted kindergarten and fifth and sixth grade team classrooms will be provided with increased, specific information regarding the level and range of student performance. Alternative forms of assessment will provide students and parents with feedback enabling them to improve academic skills. Targeted kindergarten, fifth, and sixth grade students and parents will be supplied with detailed information regarding the expectations used to assess learning activities, allowing students to increase their involvement in the assessment process. Teachers will have instruments to show the range of progress made by each student as well as various means to give credit for improvement shown, even when a student is working below grade level. Alternative forms of assessment will enable teachers to report positive student performance, show continuous progress, and integrate assessment into the learning process. The intervention will begin September 2001 and end January 2002. Project objectives will be measured by confidential surveys, confidential interviews, and language arts and math inventories.

In order to accomplish the project objectives of increased communication and student performance through the use of alternative forms of assessment, the following processes are necessary:

1. Confidential surveys seeking opinions regarding traditional forms of assessment will be developed and given to administrators, teachers, parents, and fifth and sixth grade students. Interviews will be conducted with kindergarten students to obtain their opinion of traditional forms of assessment.
2. Pretest language arts and math inventories will be given to targeted students.
3. Alternative forms of assessment will be introduced to students. These may include rubrics, checklists, portfolios, learning logs, journals, and interviews.
4. Confidential surveys regarding the additional use of alternative forms of assessment will be developed and given to parents of the targeted kindergarten, fifth grade, and sixth grade students. Fifth and sixth grade students will also be surveyed. Interviews will be conducted with kindergarten students to obtain opinions.
5. Posttest language arts and math inventories will be given to targeted students.

Project Action Plan

Teachers in the targeted kindergarten, fifth, and sixth grade classrooms will use the following timeline to introduce and implement alternative forms of assessment

Weeks 1 through 5

- A survey will be sent to parents to obtain background information and opinions on report cards. (Appendix C) Surveys will be distributed at all three sites to parents of targeted students as well as to other parents in the district. These surveys will not require participants to include names. Information gained will be held strictly confidential as there are no identifying factors listed on the survey.
- A survey will be sent to teachers (Appendix D) and administrators (Appendix E) in each of the three targeted school districts to obtain information regarding use of traditional and alternative forms of assessment. These surveys will not require participants to include names. Information gained will be strictly confidential; no identifying factors are listed on the survey.

<u>The following will involve all targeted teachers and students.</u>

- Kindergarten teachers will conduct interviews with their students. (Appendix B) The fifth and sixth grade team teacher will distribute a survey to students. (Appendix A) The interview and survey will gather information about opinions and experiences with report cards. These surveys and interviews will not require participants to include names. Information gained will be strictly confidential; no identifying factors are included.
- Kindergarten teachers will administer math (Appendix F) and language arts (Appendix G) inventories to students, and the fifth and sixth grade teacher will administer commercially prepared math and language arts inventories. These inventories will serve as premeasures to establish baseline information on academic performance. Observation checklists and performance tasks may be used.

- Teachers at all three sites will introduce portfolio strategies to be used throughout the intervention.
- Teachers at all three sites will introduce learning logs and journals. Students will use logs and journals throughout the remaining intervention.

Week 6

- Teachers at all three sites will introduce rubrics to students. Rubrics will be used to evaluate student performance and will remain in use throughout the intervention.

Weeks 7 and 8

- Traditional district curriculum assessment will be performed by students at all three sites. Information will be conveyed to parents during the upcoming parent and teacher conferences in addition to information gathered from alternative assessment techniques.

Week 9

- At all three sites teachers and students will conference together about each child's performance in preparation for parent and teacher conferences.
- Fifth and sixth grade students will prepare written scripts in preparation for student-led parent and teacher conferences.

Week 10

- Teachers at all three sites will focus on the use of portfolios with students. A survey will be sent to parents of targeted students to obtain opinions of portfolios. (Appendix H) The survey will not require participants to include names. Information gained will be strictly confidential.

Week 11

- Teachers at all three sites will focus on the use of observation checklists with students. A survey will be sent to parents of targeted students to obtain opinions regarding observation checklists. (Appendix I) The survey will not require participants to include names. Information gained will be held strictly confidential with no identifying factors on the survey.

Week 12

- Teachers at all three sites will focus on the use of rubrics with students. A survey will be sent to parents of targeted students to obtain opinions regarding rubrics. (Appendix J) The survey will not require participants to include names. Information gained will be held strictly confidential.

Week 13

- Teachers at all three sites will focus on the use of learning logs and journals with students. A survey will be sent to parents of students to obtain opinions regarding learning logs and journals. (Appendix K) The survey will not require participants to include names. Information gained will be held strictly confidential, as no identifying factors are included on the survey.

Weeks 14 through 18

- Kindergarten teachers will give math (Appendix F) and language arts (Appendix G) inventories to students, and the fifth and sixth grade teacher will administer commercially prepared math and language arts inventories. These inventories will serve as postmeasures to establish comparison to baseline information on academic

performance. Observation checklists and performance tasks may be used. Students at the three sites will perform traditional district curriculum assessments.

- Parents of students at all three sites will complete and return surveys regarding the use of traditional and alternative assessment techniques. (Appendix L) The survey will be used as a postmeasure to evaluate the intervention. The survey will not require participants to include names. Information gained will be held strictly confidential.
- Kindergarten teachers will conduct interviews with students (Appendix B); fifth and sixth grade students will complete a survey. (Appendix M) The interview and survey will gather information about opinions regarding the use of traditional and alternative assessment techniques. These interviews and surveys will be used as a postmeasure to evaluate interventions. The survey and interview will not require participants to include names. Information gained will be held strictly confidential; identifying factors are not included on the survey.
- In preparation for a student portfolio exhibition, students will prepare display materials. Parents, families, teachers, and administrators will be invited. This exhibition will be held during the day at the teachers' discretion.

Methods of Assessment

To assess the effects of incorporating alternative forms of assessment into the existing assessment process, teachers conducting this research will seek opinions of students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Students will be confidentially surveyed and interviewed before the intervention to seek opinions of report cards. After the intervention, confidential interviews and surveys will be conducted to determine

opinions regarding alternative assessment techniques. Students will complete language arts and math pre- and posttests. Results will be compared to determine effects of alternative assessments on student performances. Parents of targeted students will be surveyed with pre- and postmeasures to compare opinions of the amount of specific data concerning level and range of their child's performances and abilities provided by traditional and alternative forms of assessment. Parents will be questioned to discover if information found on traditional and alternative forms of assessment enables them to assist their child in improving academic performance. Teachers and administrators will be confidentially surveyed to obtain opinions on various types of assessments used to report student progress.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this action research was to determine the impact of introducing alternative forms of assessment into established traditional assessment programs. The goal of interpreting student performance through the use of alternative forms of assessment was to increase effective communication and provide parents sufficient information to assist students to improve academic achievement. The teachers conducting this action research encountered many different forms of alternative assessment during the search of the professional literature. Rubrics, learning logs, journals, checklists, and portfolios were the strategies selected for implementation.

Teachers conducting the research began the intervention by distributing confidential surveys to administrators, teachers, and parents of kindergarten, fifth, and sixth grade students in the targeted districts. The purpose of this survey was to obtain opinions regarding traditional forms of assessment and the resulting report cards. In order to obtain student opinions of assessment, the teachers conducted interviews with kindergarten students and gave surveys to fifth and sixth grade students. Language arts and math inventories were administered to the targeted students to establish baseline academic performance. The inventories were combinations of commercially prepared

curriculum-based assessments and teacher-made materials. The kindergarten math (Appendix F) and language arts (Appendix G) inventories administered at Site A and Site C were teacher-made. The language arts inventory consisted of capital letter and lowercase letter subtests, while the math inventory consisted of number identification, shape recognition, color and color word recognition, and counting subtests. Fifth and sixth grade language arts and math inventories administered at Site B consisted of assessments taken from existing textbooks.

Teachers conducting the research gathered opinions and established academic baselines prior to initiating the implementation of alternative forms of assessment. Portfolios were the first non-traditional assessment introduced. These portfolios were utilized throughout the school year and contained a combination of student and teacher selected artifacts. Students also began using learning logs and journals early in the intervention period. These ongoing logs and journals gave the teachers and parents a written record of student understanding of a given concept and provided the opportunity for student reflection. Two additional assessment tools, rubrics and checklists, were introduced to the students during subsequent weeks of the intervention.

Following the modeling and utilization of each form of assessment, teachers distributed surveys to parents in order to ascertain the usefulness of the alternative assessments. These surveys served as postmeasures of parent opinion. Academic postmeasures consisted of the same language arts and math inventories administered to students at the beginning of the intervention.

The teachers conducting the research deviated from the timeline presented in the Action Plan. Required curriculum and district mandates necessitated the introduction of

the various alternative forms of assessment in a sequence different from the original Action Plan. As a result, surveys, interviews, and postmeasures were administered during a different week of the intervention than originally planned, and the student led parent conferences were abandoned.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Four types of data were collected to assess the effectiveness of using alternative forms of assessment to interpret student performance. Parents answered separate surveys responding to the use of portfolios (Appendix H), rubrics (Appendix J), checklists (Appendix I), learning logs or journals (Appendix K), as well as a concluding survey comparing opinions regarding traditional and alternative forms of assessment. During individual interviews, kindergarten students answered questions about the same forms of assessment. Fifth and sixth grade students responded to a survey regarding traditional report cards and the four alternative assessment forms used during the intervention (Appendix M). Students at all three sites completed postmeasure math and language arts inventories.

Parents completed surveys consisting of the same three basic questions following the introduction of each alternative form of assessment. Table 7 indicates 97% of the parents agreed that portfolios reflected student effort, and 91% believed portfolios reflected student improvement. Of the parents surveyed, 97% indicated portfolios provided the information needed for them to assist their child in school. One parent commented, "I think the portfolio is a useful tool in understanding and following along with the students' progress. It gives a general idea of ability and weaknesses." Another parent stated, "I like the format of portfolios. It's nice to be able to see how the kids

progress throughout the year." After viewing her child's portfolio, one mother requested a conference with the teacher to discuss the lack of improvement shown by her son's work.

Table 7

Parent Postmeasure Portfolio Survey Responses

Survey Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Disagree
Portfolios reflect student effort.	24%	73%	97%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Portfolios reflect student improvement.	25%	66%	91%	6%	3%	0%	3%
Portfolios provide information that will assist parents in helping their child in school.	28%	69%	97%	0%	3%	0%	3%

Table 8 indicates 94% of the parents agreed rubrics reflected student effort while 90% believed rubrics reflected student improvement. Of the parents surveyed, 97% indicated rubrics provided information that assisted them in helping their child in school. One parent commented, " I like the specific terms on the rubric...." Another parent commented, "Rubrics explain what is expected and helps (sic) the student and the parent understand what the expectations are." An additional parent comment stated, "It lets the parent know the standard on how the child is being graded. Sometimes as a parent you don't know what the teacher is wanting so you have a hard time properly correcting your child's work."

Table 8

Parent Postmeasure Rubric Survey Responses

Survey Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Disagree
Rubrics reflect student effort.	28%	66%	94%	3%	2%	2%	4%
Rubrics reflect student improvement.	19%	71%	90%	8%	2%	0%	2%
Rubrics provide information that will assist parents in helping their child in school.	35%	62%	97%	3%	0%	0%	0%

Following the introduction of learning logs and journals, parents were asked to provide their opinion of these assessment tools. As seen in Table 9, 94% of the parents responding agreed learning logs and journals reflect student effort, and 86% believed learning logs and journals reflected student improvement. When asked if learning logs and journals assist them in helping their child in school, 91% of the parents agreed. One parent commented that the log showed their child understood the concept being taught, whereas another parent noticed that their child needed extra help with the same concept. Another parent stated, " They provide a way for everyone involved to 'look back' and see the progress the child has made." Another comment was, "The journal seems helpful as it shows what the student has learned."

Table 9

Parent Postmeasure Learning Log and Journal Survey Responses

Survey Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Disagree
Learning logs and journals reflect student effort.	23%	71%	94%	2%	2%	1%	3%
Learning logs and journals reflect student improvement.	23%	63%	86%	7%	6%	1%	7%
Learning logs and journals provide information that will assist parents in helping their child in school.	36%	55%	91%	6%	1%	1%	2%

Subsequent surveys focused on the use of checklists. Table 10 illustrates 83% of the parents responding to the surveys agreed checklists reflect student effort, and 78% indicated checklists reflect student improvement. When asked if checklists provided information to assist parents in helping their child in school, 84% of the parents agreed. The Site A kindergarten teacher developed a checklist to assess letter and sound recognition skills, while the kindergarten teacher at Site C addressed listening comprehension skills. One parent commented, " I think the specific items are great on the checklist to know exactly what the students are doing well or not in." Fifth and sixth grade parents at Site B responded to a homework checklist. One parent indicated, "The

checklist would help a great deal since he doesn't reveal all information about his progress or work that needs completed."

Table 10

Parent Postmeasure Checklist Survey Responses

Survey Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Disagree
Checklists reflect student effort.	17%	66%	83%	11%	4%	1%	5%
Checklists reflect student improvement.	9%	68%	77%	15%	7%	1%	8%
Checklists provide information that will assist parents in helping their child in school.	19%	65%	84%	6%	7%	3%	10%

At the end of the intervention period, parents completed a concluding survey to compare traditional and alternative assessments. (Appendix L) Parents were asked to respond to statements regarding student effort, improvement shown, strengths and weaknesses, and knowledge gained. Parents also rated the effectiveness of report cards and alternative assessments in providing information to assist their child improve academic performance. The survey also provided the opportunity for parents to identify their preferred assessment tool. One respondent's comment regarding assessments was that report cards are simple and to the point. Another parent preferred traditional assessments because letter grades are familiar. In addition, one parent stated, "Younger grades probably do better with alternative assessments. As they get older,

parents like letter grades." Several parents indicated a strong preference for alternative assessments. One parent stated,

> The child's progress, effort and knowledge is seen first hand in the alternative assessments. Giving a letter grade, in my opinion, has never given any proof of such. The parent just has to trust what they are told by the teacher. I have always felt this way even as a child being graded in school.

One individual commented, "I think the alternative assessment offers more in-depth information on how my child is doing and clearly shows exactly where the strengths and weaknesses are." Another opinion expressed was, "I think the alternative assessments show the individual child's effort, strengths, weaknesses, etc. better than letter grades. Parents receive a lot more information when alternative assessing is used!" An additional parent preferred alternative assessments because they are more detailed.

Many parents voiced a preference for a combination of traditional and alternative assessments. A parent who believed both traditional and alternative assessments reflected improvement also commented, "I only agree to the extent that if a grade is raised it shows improvement. It doesn't let me know anything specific! When shown a letter, I don't really know what to help with. I really like the forms of alternative assessment I've seen so far." Another parent preferred a combination of assessments and stated, " I feel that both together give the best understanding of how the student is doing."

As shown in Figure 2, 59% of the parents surveyed indicated traditional report cards helped them understand their child's strengths and weaknesses, whereas 90% noted rubrics, checklists, learning logs, journals, and portfolios helped them understand

strengths and weaknesses. When asked if assessments reflected student improvement, 75% of the parents surveyed concluded traditional assessments fulfilled this requirement, and 93% stated alternative assessments met this goal. Of parents completing the survey, 46% indicated traditional report cards furnished information that helped them assist their child to improve academic performance, whereas 96% believed alternative forms of assessments enabled them to better assist their child in improving academic performance.

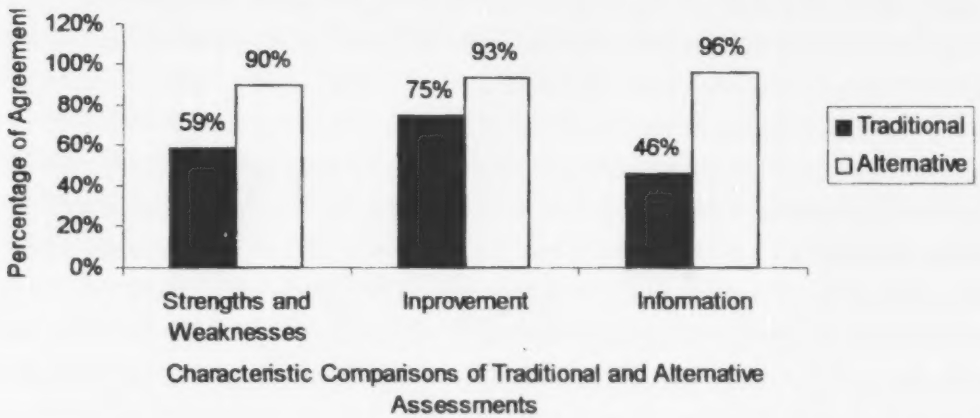

Figure 2. Parent postmeasure survey results comparing traditional and alternative assessments.

Kindergarten teachers conducted premeasure interviews with targeted students to determine their knowledge of traditional grades and testing. Results of these premeasures connoted students at this grade level did not have an understanding of traditional assessment and the resulting letter grades. Following the introduction of the alternative forms of assessment, kindergarten teachers conducted postmeasure interviews with targeted students. (Appendix B) Results of these postmeasures indicated students had gained an understanding of assessment tools introduced during

the intervention. Figure 3 denotes the percentage of students able to identify the portfolios, rubrics, checklists, learning logs and journals utilized during the intervention.

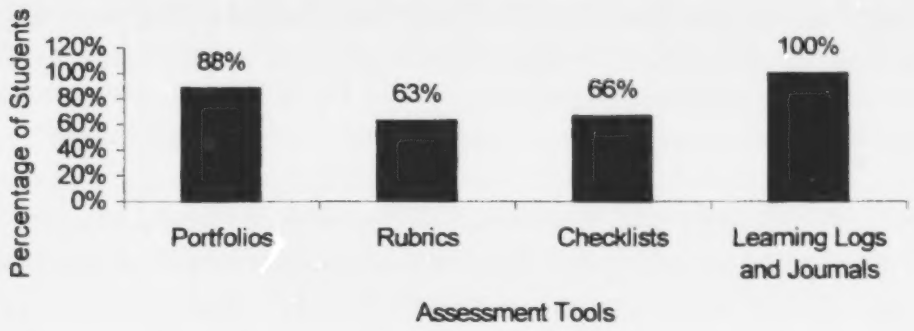

Figure 3. Percentage of kindergarten students able to identify alternative forms of assessment utilized during the intervention.

In addition to gaining an understanding of alternative assessment tools, students also formed opinions regarding the type of assessment they preferred. Figure 4 illustrates 47% of kindergarten students noted a preference for learning logs and journals, while 38% indicated a preference for portfolios. Of the remaining students, 13% favored rubrics, and 3% selected checklists as their favorite form of alternative assessment.

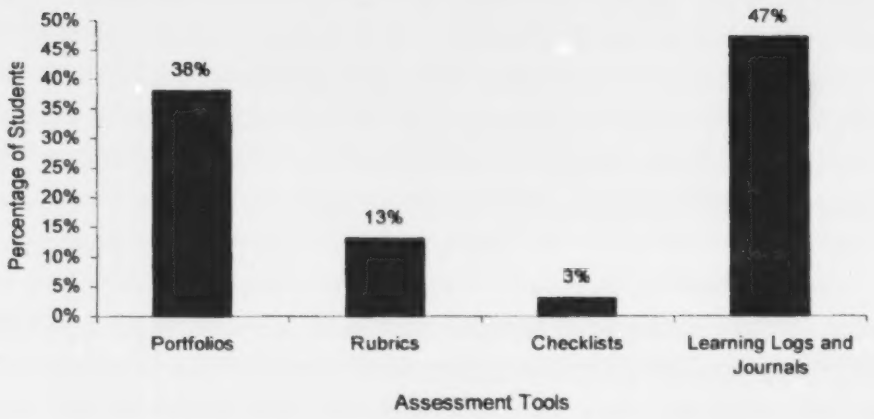

Figure 4. Percentage of kindergarten students preferring to have their work evaluated with portfolios, rubrics, checklists, learning logs and journals.

Targeted fifth and sixth grade students completed premeasure surveys to determine their opinion of traditional forms of assessment and the resulting letter grades. (Appendix A) The majority of students believed traditional report cards were very important and indicated effort and improvement. Following the intervention, students responded to postmeasure surveys regarding traditional and alternative forms of assessment. (Appendix M) Results of the postmeasure indicated most fifth and sixth grade students, 92%, continued to believe traditional report cards are important. As shown in Figure 5, when questioned which alternative form of assessment they preferred, 36% of the fifth and sixth grade students favored rubrics, while 26% indicated a preference for learning logs and journals. Of the remaining students, 23% selected checklists, and 15% selected portfolios as their favorite form of alternative assessment. When asked for comments about alternative assessments, several targeted sixth grade students recorded their opinion of rubrics. One student stated, "I like knowing what I have to do." Another student wrote, "Rubrics show exactly what you need for a good grade." A targeted fifth grade student noted, " I like rubrics because it shows what you

did wrong." Additional comments were related to the use of learning logs, checklists, and portfolios. One fifth grade student stated, "I like the learning log because you can write things that you have learned." A sixth grade student commented, "Checklists, portfolios and rubrics I like pretty much the same [sic]. Checklists and rubrics show us what we need. Portfolios show our work from different times."

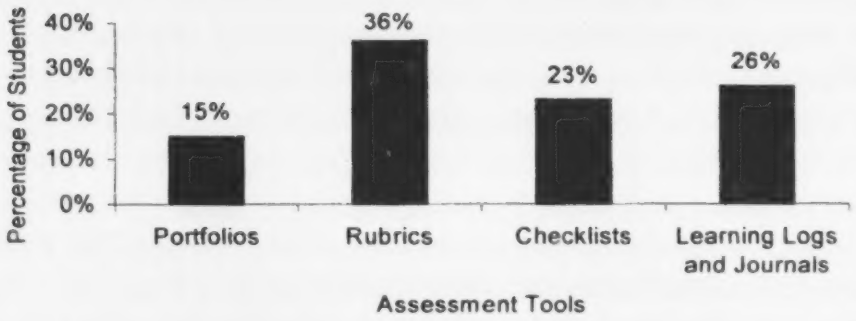

Figure 5. Percentage of fifth and sixth grade students preferring to have their work evaluated with portfolios, rubrics, checklists, learning logs and journals.

Although students enthusiastically named their favorite type of alternative assessment tool, most students were very aware of the benefits of portfolios, rubrics, checklists, learning logs, and journals. Table 11 illustrates students noted benefits of alternative forms of assessment following the introduction of these tools.

Table 11

Fifth and Sixth Grade Student Postmeasure Survey Responses

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I liked having my work assessed with a checklist.	25%	37%	31%	4%
I liked having my work assessed with a rubric.	35%	49%	12%	4%
I think having my work in a portfolio is a way to show the improvement I have made this year.	43%	41%	12%	6%
I think that work written in my learning log shows what I understand about the concept being taught.	31%	51%	12%	10%

Kindergarten teachers at Site A and Site C administered teacher-made math (Appendix F) and language arts (Appendix G) inventories to targeted students. These instruments were used as premeasures to establish an academic baseline. Following the intervention, these same math and language arts assessments were administered as postmeasures. As shown in Figure 6, 100% of the targeted kindergarten students posted gains on the language arts inventory as well as on the math inventory.

The Site B teacher administered commercially prepared language arts and math inventories to targeted fifth and sixth grade students. These instruments were used as premeasures to establish an academic baseline. Following the intervention, the same inventories were administered as postmeasures. As shown in Figure 6, results of the postmeasure assessments indicated 76% of the students showed improvement in math, while 73% of the students posted gains in language arts.

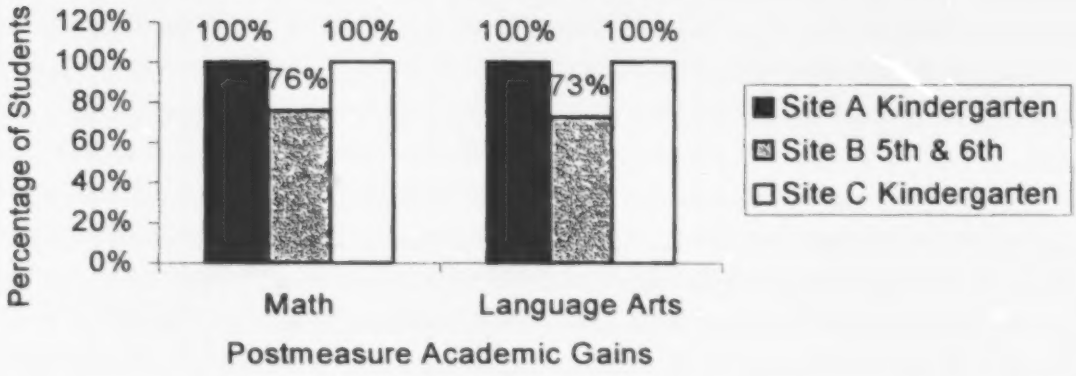

Figure 6. Percentage of students posting gains on postmeasure academic inventories.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the interventions used in the classrooms and the analysis of data collected, teachers conducting the research discovered incorporating alternative forms of assessment into their classrooms had a positive effect on parent communication and student performance. Results of the premeasure parent surveys led teachers conducting the research to believe parents had not previously given report cards much thought and had historically accepted this traditional form of reporting. This was evidenced by conflicting responses to questions asking if report cards reflected student effort, improvement shown, and areas of strength and weakness. When asked,

however, if report cards provided parents sufficient information to assist students improve academic performance, 50% of the parents questioned reported traditional report cards did not provide this information. Following the intervention, parents at all three sites responded positively and indicated the alternative forms of assessment introduced did provide the needed information.

Although the majority of students at all three sites posted gains on postmeasure academic inventories, these gains did not relate to the use of alternative forms of assessment. The language arts and math inventories chosen as pre- and postmeasures were not specifically related to the intervention strategies, and the teachers speculate the gains would have been made regardless of the intervention. The gains on these pre- and postmeasures were a secondary benefit; the main goal of the research was to improve communication and understanding of student performance.

Teachers at all sites noted the use of alternative forms of assessment improved general classroom student performance. The Site A kindergarten teacher found portfolios to be an effective tool for encouraging students to begin the process of self-assessment. Students in the Site C kindergarten classroom discovered rubrics to be a valuable instrument for guiding performance. Both teachers found the alternative assessment tools used during the intervention to be successful on an introductory level. This is due, in part, to the fact students at this age are not mature enough to fully understand the benefits of assessment.

The Site B teacher noticed improvement following the use of each of the intervention strategies. Prior to the introduction of rubrics, fifth and sixth grade students were required to present a book report. The resulting grades were of mediocre quality.

Following the introduction of rubrics, the majority of students earned high marks on their next book report because they were given the guidelines in advance and knew what was expected of them. The teacher also discovered the benefits of using learning logs when students became more proficient with self-assessment as they reflected upon their own work.

All three teachers noted improvement in parent communication and student performance, but each teacher experienced varied difficulties and levels of success during the intervention period. Local factors and age of students will determine the extent of incorporation as illustrated by the individual conclusions and recommendations from teachers at each site.

Prior to the intervention, the Site A kindergarten teacher had limited experience with alternative forms of assessment. Checklists were already used in place of traditional report cards; however, student interviews, rubrics, learning logs, and portfolios had never been formally implemented. While a journal had previously been part of the language arts curriculum, the researcher had not viewed it as an assessment tool. A thorough search of the professional literature pointed out the "portfolio" the district required to be submitted at the end of the year was, in reality, only a collection of work. While examining the literature, the teacher often questioned how well the assessment tools could be adapted to the younger students.

The introduction of portfolios was quite successful. Students were interested in choosing what to include, although many times the quality of their selection did not meet the expectations set forth by the teacher. The fact that one parent asked for a conference after viewing the lack of their child's progress shown in the portfolio was a

positive point in the intervention. This particular student had consistently turned in work completed in a hurried fashion. While this work had been regularly sent home, it took the portfolio to motivate the parent to request a conference to discuss the child's work habits.

Parents also reported positive comments about the introduction of rubrics. At this level, it appears the rubrics may be more helpful for parents than for kindergarten age students. While students were often able to verbalize the expectations stated on the rubric, they were not always able to put those expectations into practice.

One of the benefits of alternative assessment is the opportunity provided for students to reflect upon their work. The maturity level of students at this age makes it difficult for them to be reflective about their work. It was never the intention, however, for kindergarten students to become proficient in the use of these alternative forms of assessment, but rather for this time to be used as an introduction to this type of assessment.

The Site B fifth and sixth grade teacher had previously taught kindergarten and had used portfolios in the classroom for several years. During the intervention period, the teacher noticed obvious benefits in using portfolios with older students. These benefits included the increased ability to make wise choices of selections to be included as well as an increased ability to assume a portion of responsibility for their own portfolios. Upon completion of the intervention period, the teacher suggests several changes for future portfolio use. Goals to consider involve planning a more organized format, setting precise guidelines for the type of artifacts to be included, and maintaining a consistent schedule for including specified work from each grading period. Other

suggestions include training students in the art of following directions and setting aside a specific day each week for updating portfolios. The Site B teacher found the time factor to be the greatest obstacle in using portfolios.

Using rubrics and checklists had positive effects on the targeted fifth and sixth grade students. The teacher at Site B discovered using rubrics and checklists made the subjective task of grading special projects a more objective process. Once rubrics were introduced, students began to expect a rubric for every special assignment. Parents voiced positive comments and felt rubrics gave them the necessary information to help their child improve at school. While checklists also provided positive results for the teacher, students and parents were slightly less positive due to the fact that rubrics, rather than checklists, provided more detailed information in advance.

Fifth and sixth grade students at Site B used learning logs in several ways. In reading, math, and science classes, students would often reflect upon their work on tests and other special assignments. At first, students merely stated they believed they did well or poorly. By the end of the intervention, however, the students had become insightful and more proficient in assessing their own strengths and weaknesses. Learning logs were also valuable tools in math classes. In order to ascertain the students' level of understanding, the teacher often asked students to solve a problem and to explain the process they used in working the problem. While many parents viewed this concept as strange and neoteric, several did notice the benefits and were able to see, for example, their child did not understand the concept of long division. Learning logs also became an essential tool for students in each classroom. When an

educational video was shown or a guest speaker addressed the class, students used the logs as an organized place for notes to be taken and kept for future reference.

Site C kindergarten students and their parents benefited from all forms of assessment furnished during the intervention period. One advantage of this intervention was the knowledge parents gained due to exposure to different forms of assessment. Another advantage of using multiple assessment tools is the identification of strengths and weaknesses not found in the exclusive use of single letter grades.

A significant goal of the intervention was to create an atmosphere of metacognition. The teacher found, however, young children were unable to judge their work in a mature manner. For instance, they may have chosen their best artwork based on the design of the coloring sheet, not on their skill of coloring. Despite this fact, the teacher believes the experience of self-evaluation in kindergarten is a valuable introduction to the assessment process, and if continued, students will develop the ability of self-assessment.

Incorporating learning logs was this teacher's favorite assessment tool. The teacher found this tool to be a quick appraisal of skill levels. Logs were used almost daily for math, spelling, language, reading comprehension, and handwriting. Interestingly, the students also selected learning logs as their favorite assessment tool.

The three other intervention strategies, portfolios, rubrics, and checklists took more time to initiate but were still valuable measurement tools. The teacher discovered portfolios required extended time to implement and to maintain. It is, however, through this strategy that self-reflection is promoted. Rubrics, although time-consuming, were worth the time invested because children performed better when a rubric was

incorporated within a lesson. Checklists were not used as often as other forms of alternative forms of assessment in this classroom.

The teachers conducting this action research experienced varied difficulties and levels of success with each intervention strategy. Results of the intervention experiences, however, indicate the value of each assessment strategy regardless of grade level and location. Parent surveys indicated the increased communication provided by each alternative assessment rendered the concrete information necessary for parents to assist their child in improving academic skills.

It is inevitable that traditional district, state and national testing agendas will continue to be an integral part of the educational process. Research shows, however, that utilizing a combination of traditional and alternative assessment tools will enable teachers to more accurately interpret student performance. It is the consensus of the teachers conducting this research that educators, parents, and students benefit from the increased communication provided by the incorporation of alternative forms of assessment into the existing traditional assessment program. This benefit can be realized by establishing consistent use of rubrics, checklists, portfolios, learning logs and journals while still retaining the traditional letter grade report cards.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Student Report Card Attitude Premeasure Survey

Dear Student,

Please answer the following questions as honestly and accurately as you can. There is no right or wrong answer. No parents or other students will see your responses or comments. Thank you.

Your teacher,
Mrs. Throckmorton

1. How old are you? _____

2. What grade are you in? _____

Please respond by checking the statements that best describe your feeling about report cards.

Survey Statement:	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think report cards are important.					
My parents think report cards are important.					
Report cards reflect the effort I give in my classes.					
Report cards show improvement I have made.					
Report cards give information to my parents that will show them how to help me in school.					

Comments:

Appendix B

Kindergarten Student Interview

1. What is a test?

2. Have you ever taken a test?

3. What did you find out when you took a test?

4. Do you know what grades are?

Posttest

1. What is a test?

2. Have you ever taken a test?

3. What did you find out when you took a test?

4. Do you know what grades are?

The teacher will show the student a rubric, a checklist, a learning log and journal, and a portfolio.

5. Which is the rubric? Which is the checklist? Which is the portfolio? Which is the learning log? Which is the journal? Which would you like to show to your parents?

Appendix C

PARENT REPORT CARD ATTITUDE SURVEY

Parent Demographics

1. What category best describes your age?

   ___18-25 ___26-33 ___34-41 ___41-49 ___50 or above

2. What is your relationship to the child in this classroom? ___Parent ___Grandparent

   ___Foster Parent ___Other_____

3. How many children live in the home?_____

   Please list the ages and grade levels of the children._____

   _____

4. What is the total number of people living in the home?_____

5. What are the occupations of the adults in the home?_____

   _____

6. What is your highest level of education completed?

   elementary junior high high school junior college or technical/trade school

   BA/BS MA/MS Ph.D.

Your Own Report Card Experience

7. If you remember, please describe the type of report card you received while you attended kindergarten through high school.

   ___single-letter grade report card ___percentage score report card

   ___checklist report card ___written report card ___other (please describe)_____

   _____

Please check to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8. The report card I received accurately reflected my effort.	____	____	____	____	____
9. The report card I received accurately reflected the knowledge gained.	____	____	____	____	____
10. The report card I received helped me understand both my strengths and my weaknesses.	____	____	____	____	____

If your oldest child is entering kindergarten, please skip to question number 15.

11. What type of report cards have your children received?

___single-letter grade report card ___percentage score report card

___checklist report card ___written report ___other (please describe)_____

_____

Please check to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12. My child's report card accurately reflects his/her effort.	____	____	____	____	____
13. My child's report card accurately reflects his/her knowledge gained.	____	____	____	____	____
14. My child's report card helps me to understand both his/her strengths and his/her weaknesses.	____	____	____	____	____
15. Single-letter grade report cards reflect student effort.	____	____	____	____	____
16. Single-letter grade report cards reflect student improvement.	____	____	____	____	____
17. Single-letter grade report cards furnish information that helps parents provide the necessary support to assist their child in improving his/her classroom performance.	____	____	____	____	____

18 Comments:

Appendix D

Teacher Report Card Attitude Survey

Teacher Demographics

1. What category best describes your age?

___22-29 ___30-39 ___40-49 ___50-59 ___60 or above

2. How many years have you been a teacher?_____

3. What grade level do you presently teach?_____

4. What other grade levels have you previously taught?_____

Your Report Card Experience

5. If you remember, please check the type of report card you received during your school years.

___letter grades ___percentage scores ___checklists

___written report ___other (please describe)_____

Please check to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. The report card I received reflected my effort.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. The report card I received reflected the knowledge I gained.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. The report card I received helped me understand both my strengths and my weaknesses.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Experiences With Your Students' Report Cards

Rubrics are sets of guidelines clearly stating what is to be evaluated and the level of achievement that was met for each objective. Checklists are used to monitor specific skills, behaviors or dispositions, and provide a means to keep track of who has mastered targeted skills and who still needs help. Portfolios are purposeful collections of student work representing student achievement, effort, improvement, self-evaluation, and goal setting over time. Knowing the definition of these alternative forms of assessment, please respond to the following statements about assessments.

Please check to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9. I would be willing to incorporate the use of rubrics into my assessment plans.	____	____	____	____	____
10. I would be willing to incorporate the use of checklists into my assessment plans.	____	____	____	____	____
11. I would be willing to incorporate the use of portfolios into my assessment plans.	____	____	____	____	____
12. I prefer to use single-letter grade report cards only.	____	____	____	____	____
13. Single-letter grade report cards reflect student effort.	____	____	____	____	____
14. Single-letter grade report cards reflect student improvement.	____	____	____	____	____
15. Single-letter grade report cards furnish information that helps parents provide the necessary support to assist their child in improving his/her classroom performance.	____	____	____	____	____

16. Comments:

Appendix E

Administrator Report Card Attitude Survey

Administrator Demographics

1. What category best describes your age?

___22-29 ___30-39 ___40-49 ___50-59 ___60 or above

2. How many years have you been an administrator? _____

3. What grade levels are taught in your building? _____

4. Before becoming an administrator, how many years were you a classroom teacher, and what grade level did you teach?

_____

_____

Your Report Card Experience

5. If you remember, please check the type of report card you received during your school years.

___letter grades ___percentage scores ___checklists

___written report ___other (please describe)_____

Please check to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. The report card I received reflected my effort.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. The report card I received reflected the knowledge I gained.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. The report card I received helped me understand both my strengths and my weaknesses.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Experiences with student report cards

Rubrics are sets of guidelines clearly stating what is to be evaluated and the level of achievement that was met for each objective. Checklists are used to monitor specific skills, behaviors or dispositions, and provide a means to keep track of who has mastered targeted skills and who still needs help. Portfolios are purposeful collections of student work representing student achievement, effort, improvement, self-evaluation, and goal setting over time. Knowing the definition of these alternative forms of assessment, please respond to the following statements about assessments.

Please check to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9. I recommend that my staff incorporate the use of rubrics into their assessment plans.	____	____	____	____	____
10. I recommend that my staff incorporate the use of checklists into their assessment plans.	____	____	____	____	____
11. I recommend that my staff incorporate the use of portfolios into their assessment plans.	____	____	____	____	____
12. I recommend that my staff use single-letter grade report cards only.	____	____	____	____	____
13. Single-letter grade report cards reflect student effort.	____	____	____	____	____
14. Single-letter grade report cards reflect student improvement.	____	____	____	____	____
15. Single-letter grade report cards furnish information that helps parents provide the necessary support to assist their child in improving his/her classroom performance.	____	____	____	____	____

16. Comments _____

_____

Appendix F

Kindergarten Math Inventory

Counting:

1's to _____ 2's to _____

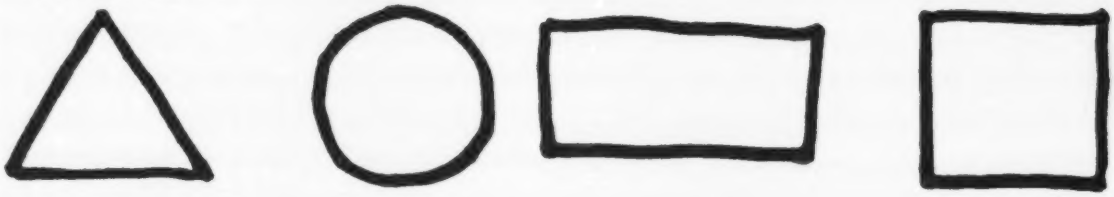
5's to _____ 10's to _____

Color/Color Words Recognition:

red yellow blue green orange purple

brown black white pink

Shape Recognition:



Dates Tested:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

(Standard 9A)

Number Recognition:

2 10 3 9 1 8

6 5 0 4 7

****

14 18 11 13 17 12

15 19 16 20

****

22 29 27 31 23 28

26 21 24 30 25

Dates Tested:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

(Standard 6A)

Appendix G

Kindergarten Language Arts Inventory _____

CAPITAL LETTERS:

Circle the correct response:

Z A Y B W C G X D V E U F T S H

R I M J Q K O L N P

Dates of Testing:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

(Standard 1B)

LOWER CASE LETTERS

Circle the correct response:

z a y b w c x d m v e u f

t g s h r i p j q k o l n

Dates of Testing:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

(Standard 1B)

Appendix H

Assessment Survey
Portfolios

Dear Parents,

I am interested in your opinion of alternative forms of assessment. You recently had the opportunity to see your child's progress by examining his or her portfolio. Please help me by responding to the following statements about portfolios. Thank you.

Portfolios reflect student effort.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Portfolios reflect student improvement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Portfolios provide information that will assist parents in helping their child in school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments:

Appendix I

Assessment Survey
Checklists

Dear Parents,

I am interested in your opinion of alternative forms of assessment. You recently had the opportunity to see entries in your child's learning log or journal. Please help me by responding to the following statements about checklists. Thank you.

Checklists reflect student effort.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Checklists reflect student improvement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Checklists provide information that will assist parents in helping their child in school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments:

Appendix J

Assessment Survey
Rubrics

Dear Parents,

I am interested in your opinion of alternative forms of assessment. Your child recently brought home an assignment with a rubric attached. Please help me by responding to the following statements about rubrics. Thank you.

Rubrics reflect student effort.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Rubrics reflect student improvement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Rubrics provide information that will assist parents in helping their child in school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments:

Appendix K

Assessment Survey
Learning Logs and Journals

Dear Parents,

I am interested in your opinion of alternative forms of assessment. Recently, you were able to look over entries in your child's learning log or journal. Please help me by responding to the following statements about learning logs and journals. Thank you.

Learning logs and journals reflect student effort.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Learning logs and journals reflect student improvement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Learning logs and journals provide information that will assist parents in helping their child in school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comments:

Appendix L

Parent Assessment Postmeasure Survey

Survey Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Single letter grade report cards reflect student effort.	8%	59%	31%	2%
Rubrics, checklists, learning logs, journals, and portfolios reflect student effort.	29%	64%	7%	0%
Single letter grade report cards reflect knowledge gained.	7%	56%	37%	0%
Rubrics, checklists, learning logs, journals, and portfolios reflect knowledge gained.	22%	66%	12%	0%
Single letter grade report cards help me understand my child's strengths and weaknesses.	12%	47%	41%	0%
Rubrics, checklists, learning logs, journals and portfolios help me understand my child's strengths and weaknesses.	32%	58%	10%	0%
Single letter grade report cards reflect student improvement.	12%	63%	25%	0%
Rubrics, checklists, learning logs, journals and portfolios reflect student improvement.	32%	61%	7%	0%
Single letter grade report cards furnish information that helps me to assist my child improve academic performance.	4%	42%	52%	2%
Rubrics, checklists, learning logs, journals and portfolios furnish information that helps me to assist my child improve academic performance.	25%	71%	4%	0%

Appendix M

Student Report Card Attitude Survey
Postmeasure

Please answer the following questions as honestly and accurately as possible. There is no right or wrong answer. Your responses and comments will held strictly confidential.

What grade are you in? _____

How old are you? _____

Please respond to the following statements about report cards.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I think report cards are important.				
2. My parents think report cards are important.				
3. Report cards reflect the effort I give in my classes.				
4. Report cards show the learning improvement I have made.				
5. Report cards give information to my parents that will show them how to help me in school.				
6. I liked having my work assessed with a checklist.				
7. I liked having my work assessed with a rubric.				
8. I think having my work in a portfolio is a way to show the improvement I have made this year.				
9. I think that work written in my learning log shows what I understand about the concept being taught.				

Comments:

Please continue the survey on the back.

Kind of Assessment	Agree	Disagree
I liked having my work assessed with a checklist best.		
I liked having my work assessed with a rubric best.		
I liked the portfolio best.		
I liked learning logs and journals best.		

Please rank the assessments (checklist, rubric, portfolio, learning logs and journals) with 4 as your **favorite** and 1 as your **least favorite.**

4. _____

3. _____

2. _____

1. _____

Comments:

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